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PERSISTENT PASTS: HISTORICAL PALIMPSESTS IN

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH PROSE

by

TAMARA GOSTA

Under the direction of Michael Galchinsky

ABSTRACT

Persistent Pasts: Historical Palimpsests in Nineteenth-Century Prose traces Victorian historical discourse with specific attention to the works of Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot and their relation to historicism in earlier works by Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg. I argue that the Victorian response to the tense relation between the materialist Enlightenment and the idealist rhetoric of Romanticism marks a decidedly ethical turn in Victorian historical discourse. The writers introduce the dialectic of enlightened empiricism and romantic idealism to invoke the historical imagination as an ethical response to the call of the past. I read the dialectic and its invitation to ethics through the figure of the palimpsest. Drawing upon theoretical work on the

palimpsest from Carlyle and de Quincey through Gérard Genette and Sarah Dillon, I analyze ways in which the materialist and idealist discourses interrupt each other and persist in one another. Central to my argument are concepts drawn from Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, Richard Rorty, and Frank Ankersmit that challenge and / or affirm historical materiality.

INDEX WORDS: Thomas Carlyle, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, George Eliot, Palimpsest, Ethics, Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, Richard Rorty, History, Frank Ankersmit, Translation, Sublime, Aesthetics, Materiality, Enlightenment, Scottish enlightenment, Romanticism

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by

TAMARA GOSTA

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2010

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PERSISTENT PASTS: HISTORICAL PALIMPSESTS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH PROSE

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May 2010

To life’s intermezzos... to my friend among other things...

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INTRODUCTION

> Jocelin's Boswellean Narrative, suddenly shorn through with scissors of Destiny, ends. There are no words more; but a black line, and leaves of blank paper. Irremediable: the miraculous hand that held all this theatric-machinery suddenly quits hold; impenetrable Time-Curtains rush down; in the mind's eye all is again dark, void; with loud dinning in the mind's ear, our real-phantasmagory of St. Edmundsbury plunges into the bosom of the Twelfth Century again, and all is over [. . .] there is nothing left but a mutilated black Ruin amid green botanic expanses, and oxen, and sheep and dilettanti pasturing in their places. (126)
>
> — Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*

In *Past and Present,* Carlyle's editorial persona flings up his hands in desperation at the suddenly shorn text, for Jocelin's history, as he has already shown us earlier in the narrative, stands as testimony of a time when St. Edmundsbury was more than a ruin whose present day "internal spaces" function as a "botanic garden" (*PP* 50). Here, all the editor is left with is blank pages and a historical void. The passage offers two commentaries on the past and its textual elaboration, history. First, histories function as theatric-machineries, producing textual pasts which operate its various perspectives. Theatric-machines also appear to work hand in hand with the "mind's eye," with the imagination. For Carlyle it is not unusual to bring together something so mechanical as theatric-machinery and something so boundless and playful as the imagination.

The image of history as a machine, producing a version of the past — imagining or imaging the past — suggests that the historian must operate the historical text responsibly. The second commentary Carlyle offers is that history only persists as long as the text does. The passage plunges readers back into the present at the very moment the text ends. Once the theatric-machinery of history comes to a halt, so too does the reader's perception of the past. Here, however, Carlyle's history imposes itself upon Jocelin's. While Jocelin's theatric-machinery stops, Carlyle's is still working. We are faced again with the abbey's ruinous state and the present that bars us from seeing through and beyond the decayed abbey's walls back into the past. All we see now are the sheep and oxen grazing together with no less than the dilettants at their sides, figuring forth Carlyle's finely pointed stab at herd-like dilettantism's blindness to the essences and complexities of the past and present. In the nineteenth-century, the abbey's medieval decaying exteriors and interiors attract "the eye of Dilettantism" and "Giant Pedantry" (*PP* 50), which, Carlyle's editor promises, will apprise his present day visitor with all sorts of superficial or irrelevant information "till human nature can stand no more of it; till human nature desperately take refuge in forgetfulness, almost in flat disbelief of the whole business, Monks, Monastery [. . .] and all" (*PP*51). Unlike the historical offerings of the "Giant Pedantry," Joceline's text, while not perfect, does not show off its learning. Carlyle once again weaves together disparate notions: the past and its textual version is at once material *and* a phantasm. Joceline's textual theatric-machinery offers a seductive "real-phantasmagory." The text materializes a forgotten past, making the present ruins of St. Edmundsbury whole again, making them an "earnest fact" but only in the reader's imagination (*PP* 51). Carlyle's narratives act out a

desire to unveil the earnest fact of the past in the "dry rubbish" of the historical library and refuse his readers a refuge in forgetfulness (*PP* 51).

This project is, somewhat romantically, concerned with the idea of the past as an "earnest fact" yet a fact that is ungraspable, residing in the realm of silence, beyond representation. Carlyle's past as earnest fact is often to be found in silences, in the blank and missing pages of official history. This project, then, makes a distinction between the past and history, which might seem, deceptively I think, a matter of mere semantics. In my distinction, I consider that the past is always mediated through narrative — history — and that any grand narrative is an attempt to master the past by eradicating some of the narrative possibilities implied in the silences that the past offers. The past is an unmediated occurrence, and as such it is beyond reference. As soon as we try to tell the past, we enter language and the past is, so to say, translated into history. In addition, acts of translation are acts of interpretation, and by referring to the past as translated into history, I want to emphasize the interpretative performance that takes place in historical discourse. I purposely use the term "translated" in this context relying on Walter Benjamin's emphasis on the translator's "fidelity and freedom" (*TT* 79), a dialectic that demands a responsible approach. Any act of historical interpretation engages in this tense dialectic. History, as the story of the past, however, is a tissue of references. And without a referent, recapturing a moment of the past proves impossible: there is too much room for freedom, and fidelity gets pushed into the corner. The past may prove to be an endless playground of interpretation, but it is a playground on which both fidelity and freedom must be encouraged.

Historical narrative by which at this moment I think of official historical documents — archival histories — appears to stand at the opposite plane from historical fiction. While the

latter readily admits its fictionality, the former claims to be true. Both, however, are narratives and "narrative" stands on the side of fiction. Although Dominic LaCapra rightly points out in *History and Criticism* that even documents have complex textual dimensions, many readers still expect and accept master narratives of official histories, which often offer comfort and closure. This project focuses on nineteenth-century narratives that either directly or indirectly engage with the question of the past and history. In a period which Nietzsche diagnosed as "suffering from consumptive historical fever" (59), with its need to constantly remember and through remembering possess the past, the writers I examine offer challenging readings of the past, its relation to the present, the methods and limits of its aesthetic representation. The attitudes towards the past are intertwined as much as past and present.

My dissertation traces Victorian historical discourse with specific attention to the works of Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot in relation to historicism in earlier works by Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg. I argue that the Victorian response to the tense relation between the materialist Enlightenment and the idealist rhetoric of Romanticism marks a decidedly ethical turn in Victorian historical discourse. The writers introduce the dialectic of enlightened empiricism and romantic idealism to invoke the historical imagination as an ethical response to the call of the past. I read the dialectic and its invitation to ethics through the figure of the palimpsest. Drawing upon theoretical work on the palimpsest from Carlyle and de Quincey through Gérard Genette and Sarah Dillon, I analyze ways in which the materialist and idealist discourses interrupt each other and persist in one another. Central to my argument are concepts drawn from Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, Richard Rorty, and Frank Ankersmit that challenge and / or affirm historical materiality.

1. The Ethics of History

Frederic Jameson asserts that "our readings of the past are vitally dependent on our experiences of the present" (11). Our own dependence on interpretative master codes hinders and limits our readings of the past, so that we are constantly dealing with what Nietzsche claimed to be interpretation of interpretations. The recognition and embracement of temporality and the interpretative ruptures that follow in writings of history has had recent criticism in the philosophy of history turn to the question of ethics. The central focus of this so-called "ethics of history" is the critique of the claim that historians should represent the past as it actually happened.[1] Historians interested in the relation of ethics and historical discourse unilaterally reject such correspondence theory; that is, historical "truth" does not equal historical representation, or to retain our distinction, the past does not equal history. In addition, these historians are becoming comfortable with the fact that objective, dispassionate observation is no longer the historian's obligation. This is not to claim, according to David Carr, Thomas Flynn, and Rudolf Makkreel, that "epistemic anarchism" should reign free over historical inquiry, but historians (and readers of history for that matter) need to "respect the role of the subject in history, both as historian and as historical subject" (ix). Finally, these historians acknowledge an "ethical dimension to the historical enterprise and view that dimension as integral to what history is" (Carr et al, ix). The ethical dimension in question here is the historian's responsibility towards the past and its historical representation as well as the historian's awareness of the limitations posed upon his capabilities to represent the past free from his own ideological framework.

---

[1] The idea of ethics of history was officially inaugurated at a conference held at Emory University in April of 1988. The conference gathered leading contemporary historians and philosophers of history such as Rudolf A. Makkreel, Arthur C. Danto, John D. Caputo, Frank Ankersmit and Jörn Rüsen, to name a few.

Drawing upon the contemporary broad formulation of an "ethics of history" as well as the ethical philosophies of Emmanuel Levinas, Walter Benjamin, and Richard Rorty, I examine the various versions of historical ethics that play off one another in nineteenth-century fiction and non-fiction. At the center of my own formulation of an "ethics of history" is a premise that Carlyle's, Scott's, Hogg's, and Eliot's historical imagination is ethically challenged as it mediates between transhistorical immanence and historical materiality. While I situate the writers within their own historical contexts, particulary emphasizing the intellectual debate between the Enlightenment and Romanticism and its aftermath in the Victorian period, striving to examine them on their own terms, I also attempt to situate them within the intellectual debates that come after, and through a simultaneous analogous reading, understand them better.

Scott, Hogg, Carlyle, and Eliot all articulate differing ethical responses to the past, each positioning, in more or less degree, the past as a historical Other, an alterity that demands responsibility. This dissertation indirectly responds to the "history of ideas" criticism as presented by Peter Allan Dale's lucid study *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History* and Avrom Fleishman's *The English Historical Novel*. These detailed and complex studies of Victorian non-fictional and fictional prose, while instrumental in any discussion of the period's relation to the past, tend to iron out the tumultuous Victorian relationship with history because they tend to sidestep questions of aesthetic representation and its relation to ethics, which tend to make history a very messy undertaking. By contrast, my project has been in part inspired by Ann Rigney's erudite study on early nineteenth-century literature and its relation to history, *Imperfect Histories: The Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (2001), which tackles head-on the question of representation in historical discourse and consequently the very genre of the

historical novel. Hayden White's structuralist theories of historicism as layed out in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* and his later *The Content of Form,* which reveal the structural and linguistic content of historical texts — the metahistorical elements — and the inherent problems of meaning were instrumental in providing me with the initial ground upon which to base my arguments.

Rigney applies "romantic historicism" not necessarily to writers who belong to the Romantic literary period or who share Romantic sensibilities but to a historical culture that was at once aware of the "past's alterity" and the "historicity of experience" inherited from the Enlightenment and antiquarianist movement (8). According to Rigney, fiction steps in as a way to reconcile the inherent past's alterity with the historicity of experience that necessarily always seems to signify an imperfection of sorts. For Rigney, then, the complex relations between historical writing and literature are a "manifestation of the imperfection principle" (7), an imperfection connected to the "problem of representability," the divide between the aesthetic effect, which is marked by the principle of "invention" and not representation, and representability (7). While Rigney's work does not specifically rely on an ethical argument, it helps me connect the aesthetic expression of a past to the ethical response towards that past.

Rigney's principle of invention and Hayden White's reading of histories as "verbal fictions" address the rhetorical and aesthetic play at the center of historical discourse, but do not fully examine the ethical implications of such play. In "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," White proposes that history is a chaotic, disordered representation of the past, and cannot be contained within a single form — because, as he has shown in his earlier *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Fiction,*

histories are ultimately "verbal fictions." This approach is, in his view, more ethical than naively mimetic stories because histories aware of their own fictional techniques point out their own meaninglessness, goading "living human beings to make their lives different for themselves and their children, which is to say, to endow their lives with a meaning for which they alone are fully responsible" (72). This sort of responsibility is not the type of ethical relation I have in mind in my argument. Instead, the version of responsibility I am concerned with is rooted in Levinas' ethical philosophy and requires a positioning of the past as an Other. Still, I find the germ of my thinking in White's claim that history is a study which is "never innocent, ideologically or otherwise, whether launched from the political perspective of the Left, the Right, or the Center" (82). The ambiguities and ironies I trace in Scott, Hogg, Carlyle, and Eliot result from their realization that the study of history or even historical representation is not innocent precisely because it is an act of interpretation or translation, and as such demands the writer's and reader's responsibility towards the past and the very language through which the past will be reconstructed and read. If history cannot be purely innocent, the study can nevetheless be ethical.

The question of the historical and my writers' preoccupation with the rhetorical (or aesthetic), the balance between materialist empiricism and idealism plays out itself and foregrounds the function of an ethical relation to the past. This balance instigates an ethical response to the past. The rhetoric of history as examined by Rigney and White is helpful to me when positioned alongside the ethical philosophy of Levinas, Benjamin, and Rorty. Rigney's positioning of the past as an alterity has led me to consider the relation between the past and present within the frame of Levinisian ethics. The telos of Levinas' philosophy was to establish the basis of what he called the ethical relation, which is distinct from moral rule and a list of

"thou shall nots" (Cohen xi). As Levinas himself insisted, he was not concerned with practical ethics as much as figuring out what ethics means: "my task does not consist in constructing ethics; I only try to find its meaning" (*EI* 90). At the heart of the Levinasian ethical relation is the phenomenology of the face: the "ethical relationship breaks out in the face to face position" (Lingis xxi). Responsibility, which underpins Levinisian ethics, is a bond that is articulated by the face of the Other, commanded by the Other's approach towards the Same.

The face-to-face position distinguishes between the Same and the Other, and the Other unveils itself as the origin of ethical responsibility. According to Alphonso Lingis, "responsibility is the response to the imperative addressed in the concrete act of facing. Responsibility is in fact a relationship with the other, in his very alterity" (xix). The alterity of the face, the recognition of the Other as distinct from the Same, the relinquishing of the desire to possess and subjugate the Other to the Same is an ethical responsibility. Ultimately, the recognition of the Other's alterity demands an act of substitution. For Levinas, the placing of oneself in the place of another is the fundamental relationship with alterity (Lingis xxviii), and as such it is the primal self-annihilating experience. Throughout my project, I will read the relation between the past and present in terms of the relation between the Other and the Same.

In addition to the face-to-face relation, Levinas introduces another category for examining the ethical priniciple: ethical language. Here Levinas distinguishes between the said and the saying, where the said is the ontological language, the language of facts and method, and more to my purpose here, the conventional, literal language of history. The saying is a trace of what is beyond reference within the said, revealed by the said if one reads it responsibly, by interupting the said. According to the literary critic, Robert Eaglestone, for Levinas, "the task of

philosophy is to interrupt the said to reveal the saying" (156). Eaglestone's ethical criticism and reading of Levinas seems to me the most appropriate way to rexamine the function of historical prose and the role ethics plays in dealing with the past.

The unveiling of the saying in the said is present in Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and "The Task of the Translator," the former concerned with historical materialism, the latter with translation. Both texts are embedded in an ethical discourse. In the "Theses," Benjamin's notions of historical time and the *Jeztzeit* become crucial as these put to question the resistance to historical materialism that is betrayed in varying degrees in Carlyle, Scott, Hogg, and Eliot. According to Benjamin, historical time is "the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled with the presence of now" (261). Benjamin's work helps me articulate the idea that the past cannot be totalized; by its very nature it resists totalization. In Benjamin's view, the historical materialist approach, unlike that of a historian who maps out a universal history, "muster[ing] a mass of data to fill the homogenous, empty time," is based on a "constructive principle" in which "thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well" (262). The principle is constructive in the very moment of deconstruction, of unraveling the idea of "universal" history.

I am attracted to this idea of an "arrest" in the flow of thoughts, or an arrest as the historian thinks back and considers or analyzes the past. It is an arrest or interuption that can unveil the Levinisian saying within the said. It is the arrest that enables the Benjaminian historical materialist to leave "others to be drained by the whore called 'Once upon a time' in historicism's bordello" (262). Here is an inticing image of historicism's bordello stocked with history's fairy tales produced for mass consumption. The whore of history seduces the historian

with lies of "once upon a time," and lies with all historians.[2] For Benjamin, this historical materialist can "blast open the continuum of history" (262), and disrupt the "causal connections between various moments of history" (263). For Benjamin, the historian who is able to disconnect the various moments of history "stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary" (263); in other words, the historian stops participating in the idea of universal, causal historical world-view, which only hides the oppressed past. Benjamin's historical materialist will "brush history against the grain," against tradition and received images of the past (257). I will demonstrate that in nineteenth-century historical prose, the past is blasted open and reveals itself as an interrupted ruinous site most strikingly in Scott and Hogg, the precusors of Victorian historical prose writers.

Benjamin's own revolutionary tone in describing the historical materialist as the guardian of the pasts, and, particulary those pasts that have been silenced, is conscious of the historian's responsibility to the pasts and its silenced voices. Thus, Benjamin's historical materialism is laced with an ethical thread, most marked in the passage describing Paul Klee's painting of the *Angelus Novus*. In Benjamin's description of the painting, the angel has its face turned toward a "pile of debris," which is the past. The past is figured as a ruin, a site which I read as the intersection of the past and present. This intersection can also be understood as an interruption in the linear unfolding of the idea of a universal history, an interruption that, bearing in mind Levinas here, invites an ethical response toward the debris of the past.

---

[2] This image is also present in Herbert Butterfields's 1931 manifesto-like essay against rigid positivist history, *The Whig Interpretation of History:* "History is all things to all men [. . .] She is a harlot and hireling, and for this reason she best serves those who suspect her most. Therefore, we must beware even of saying 'History says...' or 'History proves...,' as though she herself were the oracle; as though indeed history, once she had spoken, had put the matter beyond the range of mere human enquiry. Rather we must say to ourselves: 'She will lie to us till the very end of the last cross-examination" (131-32).

More than any other writer that I examine in this project, Carlyle refered to archival documents as debris or rubbish. His editors are frustrated by the Benjaminian pile of debris that is the historical record. In Carlyle's own narratives, the rubbish of history is illuminated when his editors encounter documents written in foreign languages, when they have to not only struggle through the vast heaps of historical documents and fragments but also through the language in need of translation. Carlyle's texts invite translation to the surface of historical discourse and the relation between translation and the original texts, or the past. Translation is based on historical materialism which does not quite give up the idea of transhistorical meaning or even mysticism. This oscillation between linguistic materialism and the traces of the original text — the saying — is the foundation of Benjamin's essay on translation, and calls to my mind the very issues Carlyle, Scott, and Hogg deal with in trying to represent the past through language. Whether they are literally engaged in the act of translation or figuratively translating the past's immateriality into historical material discourse, they are engaged in an interpretive performance, and one which demands responsibility to the orginal text and /or the past. Eliot will significantly stand out in this discussion because of a turn towards a firm control over the past on the part of her narrators, a turn towards mastery, towards consuming the past and subsuming into her narrative, a turn signaling a transition from a Romantic to a Victorian ethical sensibility.

In her desire to weave a universal past, Eliot will betray an ironic position that underlies her ethics. To read Eliot's decided ethical turn in the present's relation to the past, I rely on Richard Rorty's social ethics. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty wages war against the liberal metaphysician, who cannot escape the desire to find essential truth and meaning. For Rorty, the liberal metaphysician still uses a vocabulary belonging to Enlightenment rationalism, a

vocabulary which he sees as an "impediment to the preservation and progress of democratic societies" (44). Contrary to the liberal metaphysician is Rorty's liberal ironist, an ever contingently existing human being and ironical thinker who creates new vocabularies, and rather than finding essential "truth" or "meaning," creates contingent truths that are ever redescribing and unfolding. For Rorty, the liberal ironist is nominalist and historicist (87). The Rortean ironist "distrusts the metaphysician's metaphor of a vertical view downward," substituting this by a "historicist metaphor of looking back on the past along a horizontal axis" (96). To my mind this brings, somewhat paradoxically, Rorty close to Benjamin since Benjamin's angel never looks at the past from a bird's eye or for that matter angel's eye point of view. The Benjaminian angel of history looks at the pile of debris head on. In a similar fashion Eliot's angel in the proem to *Romola*, while initially looking down at Florence from above, needs to descend down into the historical moment for a proper look, and Eliot's own narrators in *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Felix Holt*,*The Radical* to name just two, will always dismiss the bird's eye perspective, favoring one that looks their characters straight in the eyes and examines them from ground zero. While Eliot bears reading next to Rorty, however, she is still much a product of Victorian vocabularies that seek truth underneath Carlylean clothes.

2. The Palimpsest and Palimpsestuous Historical Narratives

The the negotiation between Enlighthenment and Romantic attitudes towards the past, and the traces these discourse leave behind in the Victorian text, the anxieties over linear narrative and linguistic representation of the past's immateriality, and the unveiling of the saying in the said led me to think of these texts as palimpsestic in form.

In “On History Again,” Carlyle asserts that the “whole meaning [of the past] lies far beyond our ken” (8). The past sublimely unfolds itself as a “complex Manuscript, covered over with formless, intextricably entangled, unknown characters;” it is “a Palimpsest” (8). While the palimpsest of history is a prophetic manuscript, Carlyle concludes, it “can be fully interpreted by no man” (8). Finally, the historical palimpsest is a manuscript that defies “cause-and-effect speculators, with whom no wonder would remain wonderful” (9). I read Carlyle’s image of history as palimpsest into his own historical narratives as well as that of Scott, Hogg, and Eliot. The palimpsestic structure of their narratives is marked by each writers’ reliance on a complex editorial apparati and the use of paratexts — fictional footnotes, documentary evidence, proems and epigraphs. The editorial apparati at work unveil their hyper reflexive attittude towards their ability to fully represent the past, which is essentially unreferential. While the figure of the palimpsest is central to nineteenth-century thinking, there has been no in depth study of the function of the palimpsest in nineteenth-century texts. Josephine McDonagh’s 1987 article, “Writings on the Mind: Thomas de Quincey and the Importance of the Palimpsest in Nineteenth-Century Thought” provides solid ground for investigating the use and purpose of the palimpsets figure in writers such as de Quincey and G.H. Lewes, but McDonagh’s reads the palimpsest figure in pschological terms. I am interested in rereading the palimpsest figure in terms of historicist discourse analysis, ethical philosophy, and aesthetic theory. My primary concern is the palimpsestic structure of the texts I examine and how such a structure by mimiking the relation between the the Enlightenment and Romanticism represents and invites an ethical response to the past.

My use of the palimpsest metaphor is in debt to Sarah Dillon's examination of "palimspestic" and "palimpsestuous" readings in *The Palimpsest* (2007), and whose own work is inspired by the Gérard Genette. Dillon argues that a palimpsest is "not a metaphor of origin, influence, or filiation" (85). She emphasizes that the texts "inscribed on a palimpsest bear no necessary relation to each other — one text is not derived from the other, one does not serve as the origin of the other" (85). In other words, the palimpsest is not a study of sources. For Dillon, palimpsests "embody and provoke interdisciplinary encounters" between texts (2), her own study focuses on such encounters between contempary works of literature and theoretical criticism. According to Dillon, the palimpsest is also "a figure for interdiscipinarity — for the productive violence of the involvement, entanglement, interuption and inhabitation of disciplines in and on each other" (2). The two disciplines that are of interest to me as a literary theorist are literature and history and their relation to each other as they get entangled in nineteenth-century prose.

To my mind, the idea of interdisciplinarity emerges as a useful way to read nineteenth-century narratives about the past. This means we have to set up the relation between the literary and the historical beyond the conventional discussion of it being a blurred relation, or one where the imagination or the fictive step in to plaster the holes of the verifiable and contingent. The nineteenth-century was a historical period marked by the emergence of the discipline of history, and the gray area between what it means to write a scientific history and what it means to write a narrative history is palpable. The historical novels that lie in the wake of the rise of history as a scientific discipline, are essentially hybrids, aesthetic products involved, entangled, and interupted by historical discourse. Scott's concept of historical romance is the prime example of such interruption. The interruptions are more evident in that the historical discourse or

historicism in question in these texts is not firmly established and institutionalized and often is set against established, official histories. Carlyle's narratives at once spring to mind as histories and critiques of historical discourse. What the texts I read demonstrate is that they participate in a discourse in the making, ever unfolding, betraying differing concerns and posing varied and opposing questions yet always sharing a desire, based on an ethical precept of the past's alterity, not to condescend to the past.

In the works I examine, the palimpsest figure suggests the layered narratives and perspectives involved in telling and retelling stories of the past and the very structure of the narrative. Thus, I use the metaphor in a twofold sense — to describe the content that relies on the intricate relationhip between the aesthetic and ethical and to signify the narrative structure that always betrays a desire for non-linear representation and a relational reading. While Carlyle is not alone in proclaiming that "history is a palimpsest," Carlyle as well as Scott, Hogg, and Eliot formally reproduce the palimpsestic structure in their historical prose.

Dillon distinguishes between "palimpsestic" and "palimpsestuous," two categories that I find useful. According to Dillon, "'palimpsestic' refers to the process of layering a palimpsest" while "'palimpsestuous' describes the structure that one is presented with as a result of that process, and the subsquent reappearance of the underlying script" (4). Dillon borrows the term "palimpsestuous" from Gennet who used it in *Palimpsests* (1982) to describe a "new type of reading provoked by his idea of hypertext" (4). Genette's own use of the term relies on Philipe Lejeune's phrase "palimpsestuous reading" (Genette 399, Dillon 4). According to Genette,

> the hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading, the flavor of which, however perverse, may well be condensced in an adjective recently coined by

> Philipe Lejeune: *a palimpsestuous reading*. To put it differently, just for the fun of switching perversities, one who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together. (399, emphasis in original)

Scott, Hogg, Carlyle, and Eliot offer palimpsestic narratives in that they layer narratives. The works are in turn palimpsestuous in their unveiling of the interrelation between different discourses, in exposing the *scriptio inferior* and its relation to the overwriting, in instigating, to play off Genette, an adulterous affair between materialism and idealism or the negotiation between the historical and its aesthetic representation as well as the ethical implications of such affairs. My own readings of these texts rely on the notion of palimpsestuous reading as I interpret the texts and their respective genre forms in relation to the critical attitudes towards the past embedded in the narratives.

3. The Aesthetic of the Sublime

What I understand as an ethical response to history is connected to an intricate palimpsestuous play between ethics and the aesthetic category of the sublime. My approach to the sublime is inspired both by Frank Ankersmit's recent explorations in historical representation and the ethical philosophies of Levinas, Benjamin, and Rorty. The sublime historical experience seeks to expose the interruptions in history's apparent linearity. According to Ankersmit, in *Sublime Historical Experience,* objective historical experience is that which has dominated historicism — the investigation into the past to see historical subjects experience their world. Here, the historian threads the disparate experiences into a neat tapestry of world historical order. On the other hand, subjective historical experience recognizes that the past is distinct from the

present within which the historian writes. While both of these experiences already presuppose the separation of past and present, they do nothing to acknowledge the role the separation and rutpure play in representation. The sublime historical experience, however, is "the experience of a past breaking away from the present" (*SHE* 265). Ankersmit's phrase is comprised of two distinct categories, the sublime and the historical; one is essentially aesthetic and transcendental, the other empirical and contigent. A breaking away marks an interuption in the historical process, severing the link between the transcendental and the contingent.

This moment of breaking away serves as a point of anchorage between what Ankersmit qualifies as a sublime historical experience and what Levinas marks as the "face-to- face" encounter. Levinas claims that when one "truly approaces the Other he is uprooted from history" (*TI* 52). An uprooting from history signifies a transcendental moment, but should not be necessarily understood as a denial of history. The historian is removed from a historical moment in order to better commune with the past, and the past is always uprooted from "history" — the past exists beyond history. Ankersmit places his argument within trauma theory, and understands here the past as "born out of the historian's traumatic experience of having entered a new world and from the awareness of irreparably having lost a previous world forever" (*SHE* 265). In such a case," Ankersmit claims, "the historian's mind, is so to say, the scene on which the drama of the world is enacted" (*SHE* 265). I will not follow through with Ankersmit's conception of the historian's traumatic experience, but I will build upon the notion of the past's irreparability and the writers who seek to restore the past through their historic imaginations as enacted in their narratives. Finally, for Ankersmit the sublime historical experience is "a fusion of the objectivist and subjectivist experience of the past" (*SHE* 266), whose "mixture is highly explosive" (*SHE*

266). I am not quite sure how to undertsand this explosion, and in the climax of his argument, Ankersmit, perhaps, appropriately, becomes somewhat, so to say, sublime. Yet to think of Scott, Hogg, Carlyle, and Eliot as writers who indeed present us with highly explosive renderings of the past is not off the mark. These writers allow the past to haunt their texts.

I understand this "highly explosive" historical discourse as one in which the textual voice of the narrator of history does not seek to possess the past, but tries to co-exist, not always comfortably, with the voices of the past. In *Speaking with the Dead*, Jürgen Pieters claims that it is precisely the textual voice that lends literature a larger appeal than official documentary sources: "while the dead cannot literally speak to us, they make themselves heard in the textual traces they have left behind," both directly in their letters and diaries and indirectly, in plays, novels, and poems (4). Carlyle's fictional editors will time and time again attempt to make past voices persist. Pieters' wonderful study is an inspiration to me in many ways and not in the least because it has fed my imagination that I, in reading Scott or Carlyle in the long hours of studying them, hear them speak to me. But more importantly, this trope of speaking to the dead, which I discern in the Levinasian face-to-face injunction to be responsible to the past as an Other, is noticeable in the texts my dissertation examines. Scott, Hogg, and Carlyle, and Eliot anxiously negotiate between possessing the past and being in turn possessed by it. At the site of such negotiation, they create historical narratives that try in various ways to be responsible to the pasts they inscribe without being swallowed by them.

4. The Symbol

The different and overlapping ethical responses to the past, the writer's ways of reworking through versions of the past are not only figured through the palimpsest and the sublime but through each writers' use of the symbol. In its most simple definition, a symbol signifies an object or concept beyond itself, signifying something beyond its materiality, unfolding into a range of references. The symbol relies on a surface / depth dichotomy, where we will read surface as the very concrete object, word or image, and depth as that trace of an idea that enfolds the material. Like a palimpsest that at once calls attention to the surface of the parchment and the most eligible and fresh text *and* the underwritings and its traces, the "shadows of the things that have been," the symbol performs a dual action of preserving and creating something new, of concealing and revealing. In more Romantic terms, the symbol preserves underneath its material surface that which is universal, essential, ever true. And for the early nineeteenth-century writers and the Romantic aesthetic, the symbol was crucial. Romantic writers' understanding of the symbol are well represented by Coleridge and Goethe. These two names nearly figure as symbols themselves of the Romantic ideology, the latter being the representative of the German Idealist tradition, the former its English version. In the *Statesman's Manual,* Coleridge discusses the symbolic nature of the Bible and explains the symbol as that which is "characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal" (360). There is no doubt something mystical in the working of the symbol and even Goethe's formulations that are more secular than Coleridge's continue to invoke a certain degree of mysticism in the figure of the symbol: "Symbolism transforms the phenomenon into

idea, the idea into an image, and in such a way that the idea remains always infinitely active and unapproachable in the image, and even if expressed in all languages, still would remain inexpressible" (141).

Scott, Hogg, Carlyle, and Eliot all resort to specific symbols in order to figure forth their comment on historical representation. In both Scott and Carlyle there are ruins, both architectual and textual, that consistently play into and question the translucent relationship between the material and immaterial. These ruins markedly show how the past persists into the present, becoming even symbols themselves. For example, Scott's *Old Mortality* becomes symbolic of the persistent pasts as his character, Old Mortality, refurbishes decaying tombstones, while the narrative itself, with its refusal at a conventional conclusion, emerges as a textual ruin. Carlyle's most extended trope is that of clothes that illuminate the decaying nature of the symbol's materiality as well as the tailoring or construction — or translation — that takes place on the level of the symbolic. His interest in the face-to-face signifies the relation that takes place when one takes off the clothes of self and other and reveals one's naked vulnerable essence.

In Hogg, the symbol is not the ruin but the corpse that refuses to remain still, and that is constantly being buried only to be dug up. I read Hogg's obsessive preoccupation with corpses as his way to point out not only the past's persistence but also the underlying question to which his texts return: should multiple versions of the past be hushed up, buried in historical records and deeds or should they be unveiled? As for Eliot, in her narratives, the symbol one cares about is not the historical object but the viewer of history. In her use of the stage coach in the introduction to *Felix Holt, the Radical* and the angel in the proem to *Romola*, for example, Eliot's observers of history can enter into a detached and nostalgic encounter with the past. Her narratorial

perspective operates a double vision of the historical landscape upon which the aesthetic and ethical meet.

5. Translation

The limits to representing the past offer aesthetic and ethical challenges. To discuss these, alongside the metaphor of the pamlimpsest, I resort to translation theory and use translation in a metaphoric sense to discuss Carlyle's, Scott's, Hogg's, and Eliot's attempts at bridging gaps between the past and the historical and the aesthetic and ethical. My own translation theory derives from Benjamin's mostly because of Benjamin's own ambivalent historical materialist and idealist strain, which intellectually makes him suitable for a discussion of these writers. It would be useful to look into recent translation theories, but the scope of my project in its current state and requirements does not allow for such an investigation.

Excepting Hogg, all of the writers I deal with have at one point been translators. Scott began his literary career by translating the founder of the German Romantic ballad literature, Gottfried August Bürger, as well as Goethe. Carlyle's earliest published texts are translations of Goethe. Eliot translated Ludwig Feurbach and Benedict de Spinoza. While Hogg did not produce any works of translation, his historical narratives are conscious of the everpresent need to translate between dialects, and his texts are interspersed with Border Scots, Gaelic, and English. My concern here is with how translation can be used as a trope for history writing. All of the writers, whether literally or figuratively, turn to the act of translation in their histories and use this moment to aesthetically express their response to the past. I turn to a passage in one of the *Tales of the War of Montrose,* in which Hogg writes:

> Peter was determined one day all of a sudden that he would step into this highland reaver's den and expostulate with him on the baseness and impropriety of his conduct and try to convince him of these and perswade [sic] to keep his own laird's bounds. Expostulate indeed! Never was there a man less likely to succeed in expostulation than Mr. Constable Anston for he was violently passionate when he conceived himself wronged and though himself swayed by principles of the most perfect justice and integrity had no patience with any one whom he deemed in the wrong. Moreover having been brought up at Alloa Castle on the Forth he understood the Gaelic so imperfectly that he frequently took it up in a sense the very reverse of what it was which ruined all chance of expostulation. (101)

Hogg subtly introduces two important issues that stream through my examination into nineteenth-century historical prose: the spatial boundaries between the past and present and the issue of historical representation through language, which is in turn a linguistic boundary. While Peter will "conceive himself wronged," he does not grant such a right to anyone else. There is only one way of expostulation in Peter's world, and it is Peter's way. We can read this via the rhetoric of the Enlightenment's empiricist history: there is a way to expostulate a correct version of a historical moment. However, we are told that Peter does not understand Gaelic, and that he will frequently misunderstand it in "the very reverse." While Hogg deals with the obvious matter of what happens when one encounters another of a foreign tongue and the inherent problems of faithful translation, I am extending my reading of incomprehensibility to the question of the historian's attempt to read the past and the issues that arise from representation in historical discourse. Like the reaver who is supposed to stay within his laird's boundaries, the past and the

present need to respect each other's borders. Each historical period, each past, speaks in its own language. The historian residing in the present, encountering what Thomas Carlyle consistently alludes to a foreign country in the past, enters a face to face relation with a past that sometimes speaks a foreign language literally and, more often than not, metaphorically. If the historian resembles Hogg's Peter, then he will attempt to read the past through the register of what means "right" to him, or to put in more appropriate to my concern, of what right means to his historical period, and will understand the past "in the very reverse" (101). This type of reading of the past also suggests the subjectivist experience of the past, and ultimately denies the past's alterity as it seeks it to subsume it within its own paremeters. Thus, the past must be subject to an act of Benjaminian translation that is always at once aware of the original language's trace and the violent usurpation of the new language. Such an act operates on a similar level as Ankersmit's sublime historical experience, where we need to disconnect "truth and experience" (12). Translation is palimpsestic in structure since translations inherently gesture toward the text in the original language, thus embodying at once both the underwriting and the overwriting.

6. Chapter Outline

In the texts I read, I locate a negotiation between the need to regulate the past and to set its disruptive force free to play. Both needs provoke an intricate, complex, and palimpsestuous play between the aesthetic and ethics. Scott's Enlightenment or materialist aesthetic is mingled with flights of fancy, producing his hybrid genre of historical romance betraying an ambiguous position between regulation and play. Unlike their fellow Scotsman, Hogg radically rejects both poles of the dialectic and Carlyle attempts to ignore the need for either by leaping back

imaginatively into a face-to-face relation with the past. Eliot takes on the most definitive stance towards regulation but one not free of anxiety.

Because all the writers I read disrupt linearity and because I am primarily concerned with the impact of the Enlightenment / Romantic dialectic on the Victorians, I decided to follow suit and start from what would be the perfect middle: Thomas Carlyle. Chapter one on Carlyle serves as the origin of my argument and the bridge between the earlier and later nineteenth-century writers. In my motley crew, Carlyle also stands as the only non-fiction writer. He is not a novelist in the sense that Scott, Hogg and Eliot are, although he constantly relies on fictive techniques in his histories. His historical narratives emerge as critiques of historical discourse and most forcefully demonstrate the tumultuous relationship between historical representation and aesthetics, a relationship that unveils a particular type of ethical relation towards the past. This relationship is accentuated by his formal positioning of the editorial personas face-to-face with the texts and voices of the past. Like his predecessors, Carlyle's narratives expose an anxious negotiation between Enlightenment historiography and the Romantic conceptions of history, but offer a definitive move towards a recognition of the ethical in one's relation towards the past.

Using the ethical criticism of Emmanuel Levinas and Walter Benjamin's theory of translation, I demonstrate that *Sartor Resartus*, *Past and Present*, and Carlyle's historical essays trace a move from an initial idealist aesthetic response to a contextualized ethical response, poignantly recognizing that such a relation remains on the edge of representation. As much as they rely on a face-to-face relationship with the past, Carlyle's narratives push to the foreground the idea of limited perspective marked most consistently through his employment of multiple narrators and editorial personas in a single text. While one can argue that Carlyle fails in creating

the historical text he advocates, it is the dialogical relation among pasts and between the past and present that is the only earnest and honest way to represent the past. In his search for "earnest fact," the historian needs to be aware of two key elements. He must be aware that historical knowledge is obstructed because of a "want of Honesty" and a "want of Understanding" ("On History Again" 22). Such an approach necessitates an understanding of history as an "immeasurable mass of threads and thrum," each new epoch "chang[ing] its whole proportions, its hue and structure to the very origin" ("On History Again" 22). In his search for "earnest fact," Carlyle's historical project insists on unknowability and refuses to idealize the past. In not seeking to possess and master the past in the service of the present, Carlyle teaches his contemporaries not to read the past through the registers of the present. Ultimately, his reading of the past relies on a commitment to historical fragments and ignorance, to an earnest and honest approach towards the past that has an ethical function to perform. I call Carlyle's approach ahistorical historicism because, while recognizing that the past is a foreign country, Carlyle still wants to leap the gap and find ways in which the concerns of past individuals link with ours.

Chapter two takes the Enlightenment / Romantic dialectic backward, exploring the palimpsestic structure of Walter Scott's historical novels that engage in an ethics of remembering national pasts. Unlike Carlyle, Scott seeks to master the past for the present purposes — to reflect on the current state of the Union of Scotland with England — but such mastery always remains somewhat out of reach. I reassess criticism of Scott that reads him either through the lens of materialism or romantic nationalism, as I trace the consistent interruptions in the organic, linear historical process in *Old Mortality*, *Waverley,* and *Redgauntlet*. If Carlyle engages in ahistorical historicism, Scott most successfully performs historical interruptions through an

aesthetic that is best described by using Gavin Budge's phrase "romantic empiricism." In addition, my reading of Scott is guided by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan, and Janet Sorensen, who, in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, insist that Scott must be reread within the context of the "cultural position he occupied, mediating between (traditional) Whig-Enlightenment and (new) Tory-Romantic formations," which have been long "misconstrued as a psychological complex of 'Hanoverian head and Jacobite heart' (13). I argue that Scott does not present a schizoid historical account, but engages in a palimpsestuous philosophical discourse embedded in the internally contested genre of historical romance.

The Jacobite afterlife that leaves a trace in the present, haunting Scott's *Waverley* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1818), and *Redgauntlet* (1824) is, to borrow Cairns Craig's formulation, "outside of history" — a disturbing memory that seeks to resist historical progress. At the same time, it is within the history of England's annexation of Scotland, contained by the text. Scott's use of prefaces, footnotes and editorial commentaries and not least his careful tailoring of competing historiographical ideologies, counter the stability of the textualized memory or history and the stability of the genre, always emphasizing the narrative's ability to both sustain and undo historical memory. Scott invites memories of the past that offer the possibility of a different, more violent, historical unfolding yet betray a desire for containing the violence of the past. His ambiguity in relation to the past is the driving force behind the generic hybrid of "historical romance" that seeks at once to position his text within historical materialism and contingencies and to provide a romantic version of the past that seeks historical reality beyond material remains.

In Chapter three, I examine the decentered historical discourse of James Hogg, who offers a historical imagination more radical than Scott's as he writes an ethics of historical play. His *Brownie of the Bodsbeck, The Three Perils of Women,* and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* violently juxtapose multiple, distinct communal memories of the past, some of which are embedded in folkloric myth with fantastic elements, and others of which eschew the fantastic for rationalism and empiricism. In the *Confessions,* Hogg decenters both enlightenment and romantic discourse, showing that neither can offer suitable explanations of the past. For Hogg there is a degree of truth "out there," but neither empirical record nor oral — "traditionary" — history can tap into it. Hogg treats history like a whore, to borrow from Benjamin. He plays with her and her lies, and knows that she lies with all participants of a past. What becomes, then, more central than truth or lies to Hogg's historical vision is the idea of the human individual's responsibility to the historical moment. Thus, in both the *Brownie* and *The Three Perils of Women,* Hogg performs a deconstructionist humanism as he unpacks the binary oppositions involved in civil war and locates the human face beneath the opposing ideologies. He gestures towards the possibility of a humanist ethics within an anti-humanist aesthetic.

Chapter four centers on Eliot, who, I argue, is the writer most concerned with using the past to regulate and instantiate a model of social ethics. Hogg's playful decentering of individual and national identity exposes raw humanity caught up in the relation between the past and present. Earlier, Scott attempts with a degree of ambiguity to tailor a coherent communal memory, to tame persistent pasts that seek to undo the foundations of the present. For Carlyle, national identity and national history seem to play a very insignificant role as he turns towards the unknowable "innumerable biographies" and "organic filaments" that are woven through the

historical palimpsest. Eliot's texts stand as an interruption in my own project: she is the only female writer and the only English writer. As English she appears to be not so much anxious as to English history or national identity, and the realist move into the character's subjectivity is possible because her characters are secure in their national history and identity.

Carlyle, Scott and Hogg palimpsestuously intertwine upon her historical palimpsest. Eliot took Carlyle's dictum of history as a tailoring of "innumerable biographies" to an extent that even Carlyle would not have dreamed of and perhaps would not have wanted. Her own version of history as an expression of "innumerable biographies" emphasizes that the transcendental human core and the transhistorical response to this core is what is at stake in historical representation. She admired and "worshipped" Scott, whom she read aloud to her father (Ashton 313). No doubt, her own preoccupation with historical veracity and placing her characters in the midst of eruptive historical moments, is influenced by the archival side of Scott. Unlike Scott she takes a peak beneath the clothes of her characters. I cannot, however, imagine Eliot reading Hogg. I cannot even imagine what her response would have been. If she had the opportunity to read him, she would have read the Victorian editions of Hogg's works that have greatly mutilated the Ettrick Shepherd's texts. However, there is an unlikely and invisible cord connecting these two most different writers, and it has to do with imagining the past in relation to the individual rather than community.

I depart both from Eliot criticism that understands her as a Whig historian and Marxist readings that label her as guardian of middle class ideology, presenting her narratives as always reinscribing her characters into a hegemonic ideological formation. My reading of Eliot focuses primarily on *Middlemarch, Romola,* and *Felix Holt* and demonstrates that she articulates an

ironic liberalism as defined by the philosopher Richard Rorty, while at the same time she endorses a humanist vision of history's unfolding and a historical imagination grounded in an ethics of transhistorical sympathy. Rorty's social ethics illuminate Eliot's emphasis on the relation between contingencies and moral choices. However, Eliot does not allow for an ethics that is purely dependent on contingent moments. She desires to locate within the contingency a universal ethical bond.

Rorty's refusal to synthesize the private and the public can help us understand how Eliot's historic imagination plays with ethics and how she is reworking Scott, Hogg, and Carlyle. From Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytic perspectives, criticism has extensively dealt with the Victorian preoccupation with the role of the individual in society in Eliot's works. I want to read this negotiation within terms of the aesthetic and ethical, and as one that is nearly always presented in terms of the past and present. There is a palpable anxiety between giving the private self the right to will something other than what the community deems proper and suitable — the right to self-create. In Eliot, the self's right to self-create is always rooted in the present moment, while the limits presented by a community (be it the family or society) are deeply rooted in the past. Eliot opens the gap between one's self-creation and one's need to be part of a larger community or, to adopt Rorty's dialectic, the relation between one's self-creation and solidarity. Romola in *Romola*, Esther in *Felix Holt* and Dorothea in *Middlemarch*, to name a few, are in a constant negotiation between their private desires, their will to self-create a present *and* the responsibility toward a larger community embedded in a notion of a transhistorical past. Thus, her narratives are a space where a Levinisian ethics (the face-to face relation with the Other and the past's alterity, the unrepresentable saying) and Rortean social ethics (the move towards

solidarity and newly established vocabulary) converge in opposition, and her narratives become an example of a complex palimpsestuous play between literature and history, aesthetics and ethics, literature and philosophy. While in some respects she is close to Carlyle in her belief of essentially inexpressible bounds that weave humanity together, Carlyle's aesthetic that seeks to express this notion is itself wound up in inexpressibility and the aesthetic of the sublime. Eliot diverts here from Carlyle by formulating an aesthetics of realism that seeks to unveil essential humanity legibly and transparently.

In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh explains his earliest engagement with history, anticipating Carlyle's later notion of the "real-phantasmogary": "History in authentic fragments lay mingled with Fabulous chimeras, wherein also was reality, and the whole not as dead stuff, but as living pabulum" (79). Carlyle's, Scott's, Hogg's and Eliot's historical imagination and its aesthetic expression lays out history as "authentic fragments" fused with "Fabulous chimeras," where reality is intermingled, not always in the most comfortable way, with the imagination, where the past is not "dead stuff" but persisting and living in the present and as such in demand of an ethical response.

Chapter I: The Sublime Carlyle and the Face of the Past:

The Ethics and Aesthetics of Historical Knowledge

What is history for nineteenth-century British novelists and historians? What kind of relationship should we have with the past? Writers from Walter Scott to James Hogg and George Eliot took approaches ranging from an Enlightened, empiricist history to a Romantic history of ideas. In typical iconoclastice fashion, Thomas Carlyle rejected the dichotomy and chose both.

In a letter dated 12 April 1840, Thomas Carlyle responded to the young and distraught Geraldine Jewsbury, who lamented her loss of faith, by juxtaposing the most antithetical concepts of his age, proclaiming that "materialism is at bottom spiritualism." He continues to argue, with great zeal, that the results of "modern Science point out the body, point out matter in general as non-extant, as mere manifestation of what Faith names soul," concluding with his favorite postulation, "Speech is small in comparison to Silence." The juxtaposition of speech and silence mirrors that of materialism and spiritualism, where speech is a material manifestation of a concept that lies beyond signification. This dialectic permeates Carlyle's historical conciousness.

Speech and silence are constantly pitted against one another in Carlyle's texts. In "'Hierogliphical Truth' in *Sartor Resartus,*" J. Hillis Miller argues that "symbols, for Carlyle, are words or other signs, hierogliphical emblems, which are used to name the highest, the unnamable" (308). Symbols are representations of that which is unrepresentable and essentially silent. In the symbolic, the material and spiritual, the sayable and unsayable, converge. Similarly, Ralph Jessop in *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* (1997), claims that Carlyle "attempts time and

again to speak the unspeakable, to make visible the invisible and body forth the disembodied" (158). Both Miller and Jessop agree that Carlyle's obfuscated language signifies the requirement of a convoluted syntactic chaos to represent the immaterial. Criticism has dealt with the problem of materiality in Carlyle's texts from a Marxist and deconstructionist point of view.[3] I offer a new reading by demonstrating that Carlyle's ethics result from his attempt to reconcile Enlightenment empiricism and Romantic idealism. Analyzing this tension is crucial for understanding the strains in Carlyle's historical vision.

Even though Carlyle, as historian, is aware of history's empirical materiality, he remains a Romantic believer in its immaterial universality.[4] This paradox is my starting point. Carlyle's work spans the greater length of the nineteenth-century and his own historical discourse, as Chris Vanden Boscche suggests, works within and reacts against the remnants of Enlightenment and Romantic ideologies (xxii). Anne Rigney's notion of the "imperfection principle" — the necessary gap between the past and historical representation — further attests to the divide between the two ideologies (7).[5] According to Rigney, fiction steps in as a way to reconcile the inherent past's alterity with the incommensurate historicity of experience. While the Enlighenment / Romantic dialectic entangles Carlyle in an unsolvable paradox, it is precisely this paradox that allows for a reading of his historical imagination as an ethical response to the call of the past. For Carlyle the rupture between the material and immaterial is where historical discourse arises, and I argue that the rupture between these two ideologies places an ethical

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[3] For a Marxist reading, see Mary Desaulner's *Carlyle and the Economics of Terror.* For a deconstructionist reading, see Steven Hemling's *The Esoteric Comedies of Carlyle, Newman, and Yeats.*

[4] Jessop argues that Carlyle's theory of language is "fundamentally hostile to materialism" (159).

[5] For Rigney's reading of Carlyle's rhetorical and aesthetic strategies see "Sublimity: Thomas Carlyle and the Aesthetics of Historical Ignorance" in *Imperfect Histories*.

demand on the historian, the past always approaching the historian from the position of the Other. To read the past is to recognize, without attempting to reduce its alterity, its inner complexity or difference from the present. To read this rupture as an instance of an ethical response, I suggest that Carlyle's historical consciousness distinguishes between the past, which is immaterial and forever remains an ungraspable referent, and history, which is material and tries to grasp the past. For Carlyle, history gestures towards *and* resists totalitization. Carlyle practices what I call ahistorical historicism, an approach that recognizes with "earnestness" or "honesty" and "understanding" the essential within the contingent. Such ahistorical historicism is the foundation of Carlyle's ethical relationship to the past.

Drawing upon Kant's aesthetic of the sublime, Levinas' metaphysical ethics and the phenomenology of the face, as well as Benjamin's concept of "translation," I place Carlyle in what Levinas calls a "face-to-face" position with post-Enlightenment philosophy in order to examine the ethical implications of historical representation in his work. Through an analysis of his historical essays, *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34), and *Past and Present* (1843), I argue that in Carlyle's historical vision the past becomes Levinas' Other, a relation that remains on the edge of representation. Carlyle's own metaphor of history as palimpsest enables his editorial and historian personas to enter a face-to-face encounter with the past, forging a translation of the past into historical discourse that ultimately marks an ethical relation.

1. The Ethics of Reading the Past

While Carlyle never explicity makes the distinction between the past and history, generally using the terms interchangeably, he comes close to directly positing the past as

something different than history in his essay "On History Again" (1833), in which he explains that history is the "only articulate communication [. . .] which the Past can have with the Present" (15). History is a "Letter of Instruction" and as such stands in between the past and present, mediating between these two distinct temporalities. "History" as the only "articulate communication" between the past and present requires the would-be historian to handle history properly. Otherwise, the past will end up distorted, disfigured and ultimately lost. Carlyle passes judgment on the current state of historical study: "our 'Letter of Instruction' comes to us in the saddest state, falsified, blotted out, torn, lost, and but a shred of it in existence," and what is worse, what history is available is "difficult to read, to spell" (16). According to Carlyle, it is not the "historic organs" that are at fault but the "misuse of these; say rather, in so many want and obstructions [. . .] especially two wants press heavily in all ages: want of Honesty, want of Understanding" (18).

An approach grounded in honesty and understanding is an ethical approach, requiring the historian to comprehend his subject as an "immeasurable mass of threads and thrum," each new epoch "chang[ing] its whole proportions, its hue and structure to the very origin" ("On History Again" 22). The implication of history's dynamism and immeasurability is that the historian faces temporal and epistemological limits; he can neither read nor write history properly, and thus his "articulate communication" with the past becomes in effect inarticulate and mute. As a form of communication, history is already and always a text reaching to grasp the silence. Ideally, history's job is to help the "the thing gone silent, named Past" (16) to speak again. It is the dialogical relation among pasts and between the past and present that is the only honest way to represent, what Carlyle calls in *Past and Present* (1843), the "earnest fact" of the past (51). In

his search for an "honest" approach to "earnest fact," Carlyle insists on unknowability and refuses to idealize the past. In refusing to possess, master, or totalize it, Carlyle teaches his contemporaries not to read the past through the registers of the present and lets the past speak for itself. Such an attitude towards the past welcomes the past as an Other that places an ethical demand on the historian, a demand marked by responsibility.

David Sorensen asserts that Carlyle "never conceived a coherent, systematic or consistent conception of history" (79). I contend, however, that while Carlyle's conception is unsystematic, he nonetheless develops a coherent practice and point of view about history, woven through four simultaneous and overlapping yet distinct moments. I first read the Carlylean historian's engagement with the past as a fundamentally sublime experience.[6] The past has the vastness and dynamism of the sublime, and as such the historian's initial response is aesthetic, an exercise of the imagination's free-play in the face of the unsayable. The second step requires of the historian to move from the sense of the sublime, grounded merely in the aesthetic, to a model of history in which the aesthetic and ethical meet. The past as Other, as the infinitely foreign, demands the historian's self-annihilation as a means of approaching what Emmanuel Levinas calls a "face to face" encounter. The Other demands the historian's response, which does not consist of mere antiquarian fact-checking, preservation, and presentation of what Carlyle would refer to as the "clothes" of history. Rather, the historian must reveal the "organic filaments" that bind human beings in every age. The symbolic re-presentation brings us to the final step: the translation of the past into history. I purposely use the term "translated" in this context relying on Walter

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[6] Drawing upon Frank Ankersmit's *The Sublime Historical Experience* (2005), I read the past through the registers of Kant's aesthetic of the sublime. The Carlylean historian first recognizes that the past is beyond his cognitive faculties, foreign to his reason and understanding; it is unspeakable and resides outside or beyond the system of language.

Benjamin's emphasis on the translator's "fidelity and freedom" (*TT* 79), a dialectic that is endemic to historical interpretation. Through writing the historical narrative as an act of translation, the historian illuminates what is lost and gained in the transference of the past into history.

We can get a glimpse of Carlyle's own ethics of translation through his work on Goethe. In his translations, Carlyle was interested in trying to retain what he called Goethe's "tune" — the text's spirit rather than its exact wording. *Sartor Resartus, The French Revolution* (1837) and *Past and Present* all simultaneously allude both to translation proper (fragments of Teufelsdröchk's philosophical thought are translated by Carlyle's editor; the narrator of the *French Revolution* draws on multiple French sources, the editor in *Past and Present* has his hands full with "monk Latin") and to the metaphorical translation of turning the past into history. The historian, like the translator, faces constant negotiation between reading the remnants of the past and writing / translating the past. For Carlyle as for Levinas, language is the site of the ethical relation to the Other, or in the case of historical narratives to the past. The works of Walter Benjamin and Emmanuel Levinas, while neither directly influenced by nor engaged with Carlyle, illuminate Carlyle's anxious negotiation between Enlightenment, materialist historiography and the Romantic, idealist conceptions of history.

2. The Face of the Past: An Ethical Response to the Aesthetic Experience

In "The Diamond Necklace" (1837), Carlyle's historian throws a dart at "scientific curiosity" and antiquarian fact checking:[7] "O reader, that too insatiatable scientific curiosity of thine; let thy *aesthetic f*eeling first have place" (115, Carlyle's emphasis). The aesthetic feeling is all the reader should seek. Calling "The Diamond Necklace" a "true fiction," he hoped to make a true fiction out of the *French Revolution* as well, and even more so, he hoped to "make an artistic *Picture* of it" (*CL* 7: 240-248, Carlyle's emphasis). By making an "artistic picture" out of a historical event, Carlyle implies that he intends to write a disinterested account of the past, to provide an aesthetic experience or impression of the past. Carlyle's own term, "true fiction," lends the most appropriate description of his work: a complex narrative of historical fact sometimes left to speak for itself, but more often than not obscured and "corrected" by Carlyle's idiosyncratic imagination. Carlyle's imagination, however, never imposes order and coherence onto the past. One can certainly argue that Carlyle as historian fails in his own theoretical practice. His voice is excrutiatingly loud and his verbal pyrotechnics overpower the past itself. And yet his performative style reflects a sort of Bakhtinian polyphony that unravels the complex layers of the past and its voices. If he fails in letting the past, strictly speaking, speak for itself, he at least enters a cacophonous conversation with the pasts. His imagination, then, both consumes and is consumed by the past.

But Carlyle's understanding of "fiction" did not necessarily include "falsification;" rather, "true fiction" becomes a higher order truth, a truth which knows its limitations and boundaries.

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[7] Interestingly, however, Carlyle's historian of the Diamond Necklace affair is always quick to note how a previous historian falsified a fact or got a fact wrong. For example, there is "endless confusion of dates" in Lamotte's version of the story (124) and Madam Campan has "no notion of historical rigor" and "requires to be read with skepticism" (104).

Giving into the unknowable past requires this "aesthetic feeling," which precludes the reader from asking too much, from attempting to verify every detail. The "aesthetic feeling" becomes a particular way of approaching and commenting upon the past, motivating a particular type of ethical response to the past. It is an aesthetic of giving into those who inhabit the realm of the past — the dead. In *Truth and Method*, Hans Gadamer will explain the aesthetic experience as one "that suddenly tears the person experiencing it out of the context of his life, and yet relates him back to the whole of his existence," presenting a "fullness of meaning that belongs not only to this particular context or object but rather stands for the meaningful whole of life. An aesthetic *Erlebnis* always contains the experience of an infinite whole" (60-61). In Carlyle's historical narratives, the aesthetic topos of letting oneself be consumed by the aesthetic product, or in our case, the past, is ethical in nature. In Carlyle's historical narratives, the aesthetic and ethical come face-to-face.

What would an ethical relation to the past and its translation into history entail? I start from what Carlyle has to say about reading: "Reading, a speculative study, cannot do all; but it can do much; it is the best foundation for the doing of all" (*CL* 12: 336-340). There is something uneasy in this statement about reading. Reading is described as a game of guess work (what did the writer want to say? How do I benefit from this story?) and a "foundation," but one would think that a foundation based on speculation is not comforting. Such uneasiness marks all of Carlyle's writings and in fact instigates "speculative reading" in the sense of reflective and meditative reading. The statement emphatically gestures to an inherent quality of reading: reading is almost a moral or ethical act — it is the bedrock for the "doing of all" but only after careful cogitation. What Carlyle ultimately privileges is an encountering with the past through

reading. Reading histories is something he advised above all other reading. " 'Ask of the Dead,' says Plutarch's old oracle," Carlyle writes in a letter to Gelarldine Jewsbury; "[i]nquire and see how the Noble and the True, your Brethren of other countries and ages, lead their Life; learn in many ways to lead your own thereby!" (*CL* 12: 336-340). For Carlyle, histories when "faithfully studied" end in "biographies as the flowers of History," and readers of Carlyle are well aware that most of his historical narratives are, in truth, what we would call biographies. Biographies, according to Carlyle, "are a kind of face to face communicating with the Heroes and the Teachers." He concludes his remarks by calling history a "Gospel" and a "solid study [that] takes into question the whole man" (*CL* 12: 336-340). The topos of face-to-face communication with the dead, the call on us to "ask of the dead" reoccurs in Carlyle's texts, and serves as the foundation of his ethical approach to history. Carlyle's response to life and its present, begins with the dead and death.[8]

The face-to-face encounter, which establishes closeness in unsurmountable distance via reading biographies, is central to Carlyle's historical vision. This concern prefigures the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Reading Carlyle before the face of Levinas and Levinas before the face of Carlyle brings these two most distinct figures to a certain proximity. In "Ethics as First Philosophy" (1988), Levinas reacts to the position where the "identical and non-identical are identified" (78). Western thought, according to Levinas, has been driven by reducing that which is not "I" to the "I" or the Other to the Same: "Since Hegel, any goal considered alien to

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[8] According to John M. Urlich, the "immediate event that allowed Carlyle to write "'two Books at once'" (*Past and Present*) was not his experience of the St. Ives workhouse or the ruined abbey at Bury St. Edmunds" as suggested by Fred Kaplan in his biography of Carlyle; rather, Urlich suggests, the event is Carlyle's visit to the London Library on 12 October 1842 (33). It is then that Carlyle borrowed *Chronica Jocelini de Brakelonda*, which, Urlich claims, "provided Carlyle with the rhetorical strategy he needed to write two books at once, to be (in this case) in the twelfth century and the nineteenth century at the same time" (33). Thus, the very act of reading, and, through reading, speaking with the dead Jocelin, prompts the writing of Carlyle's most ethically responsible text.

the disinterested acquisition of knowledge has been subordinated to the freedom of knowledge as a science (*savoir*); and within this freedom, *being* itself is from that point understood as *the active affirming of that same being, as the strength and strain of being*" (78, Levinas' emphasis). Levinas concludes that the "Wisdom of first philosophy is reduced to self-consciousness" (78). The reduction of everything that is not I, the reduction of the Other to the Same is possible because, according to Levinas, Western thought is "unhindered by any memory or remorse," always looking onto a "glittering future where everything can be rectified" (78). This position towards the future exemplifies the tendencies of the growing discipline of history during the nineteenth-century — its rhetoric of progess and development, where the past is used and employed insofar to mark the diachronic movement of civilization's progress. Carlyle calls the rhetoric of progress into question when he asks of us to reflect upon the ruins of St. Edmundsbury, proclaiming that "Life lies buried there!" (*PP* 54), he forcefully calls our attention to death, the mortality of those before us and consequently points to our own mortality. The very possibility and inevitablity of death hinders the idea of a "glittering future," and death lies at the heart of both the Levinisian and Carlylean face to face encounter.

Carlyle demands of us to face the dead. In this demand, he calls for us to posit the past as Other, and in turn historical narrative emerges as ethical in nature. Carlyle thus asks us to enter into a relation within which the past's alterity must be recongnized and accepted. The past is not something that the present can make use of for its own purposes. In other words, the past must not be reduced to the present — it must be handled and respected on its own terms. The present is summoned and called into question by the past's alterity. In recognizing the past's alterity, the historian also recognizes his inability to completely know the past; that is, the historian cannot

possess the past through his narrative. An attempt to possess, to know, the past, would mean to reduce the past to the terms of the present, to reduce the Other (read past) to the Same (read present). The present has an ethical responsibility towards the past. As a historian, Carlyle sought to locate a space in which the past can be contemplated responsibily.

In his 1842 letter to Emerson, Carlyle, referring to his inability to complete *Cromwell* and begin writing *Past and Present,*[9] writes despondently: "One of my grand difficulties I suspect to be that I cannot write two Books at once; cannot be in the seventeenth century and in the nineteenth at one and the same moment" (*CL* 15: 56-59). In his 1841 "Baille the Covenator,"[10] Carlyle advises the historian to "*read* himself *into* the century he studies" (237). A most remarkable image and commentary on the role of reading not only texts but cultural references. To read oneself into the past entails a complete immersion of oneself into time that is no longer available — a nearly impossible feat, yet Carlyle asks us to do it. Reading oneself into the century one studies mirrors the substitution Levinas urges: one must place oneself in the place of another. Carlyle explains to the reader that the student of history, when studying the past, will "at first entrance [. . .] find all manner of things, the ideas, the personages, and their interests and aim foreign and unintelligible" (237). The student of history "yet knows nobody, can yet care for nobody, completely understand nobody" (237) in the century he studies. Therefore, Carlyle emphasizes that "he must read himself into it" and "make himself at home and acquainted, in

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[9] As John M. Urlich points out both Richard Atlick, in his introduction to the *Riverside* edition of *Past and Present,* and John D. Rosenberg, in his *Burden of History,* agree that Carlyle's summer 1842 trip through East Anglia motivated his writing of *Past and Present,* thus diverting his interest from *Cromwell* (33).

[10] A review of *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, A.M., Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1637-1662*, edited by David Laing from Baillie's manuscripts. The essay appeared in the *London Westminster Review* (72), and Carlyle both reviews Laing's editorial skills as well as Baillie's own texts and style of record. Halfway through the essay, Carlyle confirms "that is time to let Baillie speak a little for himself" (239) and devotes ample space to long quotations from *The Letters*.

that repulsive foreign country" (237-38). Only by fully reading herself into the past can the historian begin to hear the past speak to her: "The daily tattle of men, as the air carried it two hundered years ago, becomes audible again in those pages: an old dead Time, seen alive again, as through a glass darkly" ("Baille" 249). In the case of historical narratives, the text materializes a particular past: through language, dead time becomes alive but the vision is always marred and slightly disfigured. Carlyle concludes that Baille's "hasty chaotic records" are "worth reading" (238). He asserts that Baille's letters can provide us a with a clearer picture of the past than the very newspapers of Baille's time, which were according to Carlyle, "in fact little other than dull-hot objurgatory pamphlets" and "grown cold enough now" (238). Baille, however, "is the true newspaper; he is to be used and studied like one" (238). Baille manifests himself as the face of the past, the face we must approach to understand the essence of Baille's historical moment. Reading oneself into the past requires of us to dispel our own contemporary frame of mind, a complete dissolution of the self and acknowledgment of otherness.

Frederic Jameson's assertion that "our readings of the past are vitally dependent on our experiences of the present" (11) helps us understand Carlyle's awareness of the historical events, material events becoming texts and textual events. Our own dependence on interpretative master codes hinders and limits our readings of the past, so that we are constantly dealing with what Nietzsche claimed to be interpretation of interpretations. The foregrounding of interpretation as the act of writing history puts to question the telling of events as they happened. Interestingly, the tenets of how to approach history as laid out by contemporary historians, certainly influenced and guided by postmodern thought and general acceptance of relativity when it comes to Truth, echo Carlyle responding fervently, both as historian and historical subject, to the growing debate

surrounding historiography in the nineteenth-century. While Carlyle as historical subject occupies the historical period we call Victorian, he is fundamentally the product of what we call the Romantic era. More traditional criticism marked Carlyle as the "Victorian sage," the historian prophet, who looking into the past predicts the future and maps out humanity's progress. Thus, Peter Allan Dale argues in *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History*, the nineteenth-century philosophical use of history was a "means to comprehending the present and predicting the future" (6). In fact, Dale suggests that the nineteenth-century's approach to history sought to answer "every problem, religious, philosophical, moral, scientific, aesthetical, confronting the mind of man" (6). Dale assigns such an understanding of the historical process to both Matthew Arnold and Carlyle. But Carlyle was more invested in helping society recognize its "spiritual life" than in mapping out a reform program for the ruinous state society has fallen into as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution.

In "On History," Carlyle sets forth his primary principles concerning history and historical knowledge. Like our contemporary historians, Carlyle urges us to understand that it will not "adequately avail us to assert that the general inward condition of Life is the same in all ages" nor are the "more important outward variations easy to fix on, or always capable of representation" (7). Carlyle brings up fundamental questions that, as we have seen, still plague historical inquiry: problems of representation, issues of historical event and truth. He proceeds to warn us that there is a "fatal discrepancy between our manner of observing [events], and their manner of occurring" (7). Our experiences are imperfect; our ability to properly represent experience (through language) is imperfect, marked by misunderstanding and incompleteness. At this point, it is quite tempting to label Carlyle as a proto-postmodern historian, a proto-Derridian

figure clothed in Victorian cloth, but that would lead us astray. We cannot claim that Carlyle sought to deconstruct the past. At most he deconstructed history in so far as to show the primacy of the past and its universal category. Carlyle's own narratives imply that writing / language seeks to totalize and possess reality; in other words, language can materialize realities and realities of the past, but to Carlyle reality, or specifically the past, cannot or should not be possessed. With all his understanding of the problems that arise in labeling events and totalizing the historical process, Carlyle does not necessarily want to impose anarchy on natural order or to claim that the only reality one can know is the one woven through language or a particular kind of discourse. Quite the contrary, he believes that there is a reality beyond us, beyond our capability to grasp it through reason, through language. The desire to possess the past would be contrary to any ethical relation with the past. The past should remain transcendent. So, how does one deal with the problem of langauge and ethics when our only recourse to the past is via langauge? If langauge and historical discourse always have at heart to totalize and possess the past, how can a historian write history and retain the Levinisian ethical relation? If historical discourse has the power to possess the past, it follows that the past or the experience of the past must remain beyond language or representation to preserve the ethical relation. I attempt to answer these questions by reading Levinas into Carlyle and then reading Carlyle on his own terms, within the context of eighteenth-century philosophy.

In his own work, Levinas struggled with the issue of representation. According to Robert Eaglestone, Levinas is "suspicious of the idea of representation, in art or otherwise, and either ignores representation or attempts to circumvent it" (99). In "Violence and Metaphysics," Derrida deconstructs Levinas' phenomenology of the face that relies on the acceptance of "true

representation" or the possibility of representing that which is inherenlty unrepresentable. For Derrida, Levinas' ethical metaphysics that seems to want to transcend language undoes the ethical relation Levinas wants to establish. According to Robert Eaglestone, Derrida's essay inspires Levinas to write *Otherwise than Being,* in which he faces questions of representation, positing the significance of language for the ethical relation and proposing the idea of "ethical language." For Levinas, the face will at once surpass the constraints of form and matter and exist within those constraints (Eaglestone 99), which is what Robert Bernascone argues — in Levinas there is both an empirical and transcendental understanding of the face (39). While Levinas calls forth the phenomenon of the face, he was equally adamant to qualify the face as a "trace," as something that is both present and absent: "A face as a trace, trace of itself, trace expelled in a trace, does not signfiy an indeterminate phenomenon [. . .] The thematization of the face undoes the face and undoes the approach. The mode in which the face indicates its own absence in my responsibility requires a description that can be formed only in ethical language" (*OB* 94). This ethical language, like the face it seeks to ultimately express, is both empirical and transcendental. Frustratingly, Levinas relegates a reluctant definition of ethical language to a footnote:

> Ethical language, which phenomenology resorts to in order to mark its own interruption, does not come from an ethical intervention laid out over descriptions. It is the very meaning of approach which contrasts with knowing. No language other than ethics could be equal to the paradox which phenomenological description enters when, starting with the disclosure, the appearing of a neighbor, it reads it in its trace, which orders the face according to a diachrony which cannot by synchronized in representation. A description at the

> beginning knows only being and beyond being turn into ethical language (193).

Perhaps Levinas' own elusiveness in defining ethical language seeks to express the impossibility of expressing that which is inherently inexpressible. Like the face, it seems to both operate on the level of representation and nonrepresentation. For Levinas, "language is made up of the saying and the said: it is the task of philosophy to interrupt the said to reveal the saying" (Eaglestone 156). The moment of interruption is significant for Levinisian ethics — if there is no interruption, we end up with a totalization, with a reduction of the Other to the Same. Moments of interruption, however, enable the otherness of the Other to remain intact. While there is a general disagreement and confusion among Levinisian critics on the meaning of the Said and Saying, it is universally agreed that the Said is ontological language — language of facts and straightforward content of statement. In the case of our historical discourse, the Said is the linear recorded history, the coherent and totalized past. The Saying is ethical language: "it is a language that always carves out a passage from the same to the other" (Robbins 144). The Saying is always contained within the said, but only careful, ethical and responsible interpretation of the Said will reveal the Saying.

Carlyle's distinction between Speech and Silence appears to operate on the same level as Levinisian Said and Saying. Speech is that material representation of that which is silent, which is unrepresentable, of that which resides beyond the materiality of language. In a letter to Emerson, Carlyle reveals his anxiety concerning the writing of the *French Revolution:* "I am busy constantly studying with my whole might for a Book on the *French Revolution*. It is part of my creed that the only Poetry is History, could we tell it right" (*CL* 7: 262-267). As the title of

Jonathan Rosenberg's study of Carlyle's historical narratives attests, *Carlyle and the Burden of History,* Carlyle took on himself the responsibility of "telling it right." The preoccupation with "telling it right" alludes to the carefulness with which Carlyle approached the past: one must not simply *speak* the past, one must *tell* it right. Thus, the historian should play the role of a storyteller, a storyteller who is able to unearth the saying from the dull facts of the said, and re-tell the past and its experiences.[11]

The impossibility of representing the past and the tension that arises from such impossibility is visible in Carlyle's writing. In *Imperfect Histories,* Anne Rigney argues that Carlyle's style, the aesthetics of his language, marks historical discourse as unintelligible, always fragmented and incomplete, destined to fail in the representation of a coherent past. For Rigney, however, the inherent chaos encompassing historical discourse is not so much a failure as a necessary rhetorical strategy for representing something that is unrepresentable – the past is, after all, a slippery referent. No doubt, Carlyle is a dense writer and his language is no way translucent. Carlyle's language is a textual representation of history's materiality, simultaneously veiling and unveiling the historical past: heavy, obtrusive, allegorical, extensively metaphoric and symbolic, leaving a trace of semantic chaos, precisely because "the current of human affairs" ("On History" 5) is on the edge of representation. The writing itself is figurative and because the rhetorical figures Carlyle relies on mediate materiality and immateriality (as his notion of symbol best exemplifies), the reader must always negotiate between the textual materiality of his narrative and the very meaning the narrative seeks to represent. While Rigney understands Carlyle's obscurity as merely a rhetorical strategy, by applying Levinas' ethical

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[11] In *Carlyle and the Burden of History*, Rosenberg discusses the multiple narratorial voices of the *French Revolution*. Such competing perspectives and the willful failure of narratorial control enable Carlyle to deal with the complexities of representation and language that prefigure the Levinisian Saying within the Said.

language and unveiling the Saying in the Said, we can unveil the ethical nature of Carlyle's historical representation.

Thus, the immediate issue with historical discourse is its claim to truth, or to put in terms that I am using, the immaterial, and the relation between the immaterial and actual historical, material referent. Another way to posit this relation is to say that historical discourse is concerned with the relation between the past and the translation of the past into history. At the moment when a historian decides to mediate the past through language, the past becomes history; the past becomes material. In T*he Rhetoric of Historical Representation*, Anne Rigney defines historical discourse in a succinct and lucid way: "historical discourse is defined by the fact that it deals with real events and not imaginary ones. Whereas fictional events are brought into being with the discourse which narrates them, historical events have by definition an existence prior to, outside of, the particular discourse in which they are represented" (12). However, Rigney warns that even though we "recognize that these events actually took place, we must also recognize that they could never be recounted after the fact without being translated into another medium" (12). That is, the actuality of history, the actual historical event will be mediated through language. But language constructs as much as it signifies, and this is the central problem that historical discourse grapples with. For Rigney, the "discursive account of events is inevitably a form of shorthand vis-à-vis the totality of 'what happened'" (12). The idea of totality, totalizing and containing the historical past is exactly what Carlyle reacts to: in Carlyle's writing there is historical excess that can never be contained precisely because the past lies outside the system of language — it is silent. This silence is a particular type of silence; it is a silence that breaks through the burden of many voices. There are pasts and memories that

evade communal recollection and historic memory. As Carlyle insists, there are "innumerable biographies."

There is a living world of the past that lies beyond language, haunting the present. For Levinas such haunting manifests itself in the face, in its sublimity and irreducibility to a concept, a face made of traces and multiple faces of those dead or yet unborn. For Carlyle, the haunting of the past manifests itself in the biographies and the historical narratives that are conscious of their inability to completely totalize and possess the past which they seek to express. In fact, Carlyle has little respect for language – speech – never tiring of reminding us that "*Speech is silvern, Silence is golden*" (*Sartor* 162; emphasis in original). It is in silence – or the essence of the past hidden beneath the historical fact – that we need to look for humanity's meaning. This silence is the Saying, that which resides beyond language, beyond the Said. After all, "our whole spiritual life is built" ("On History" 5) on a notion of history that exists beyond a meticulous record of facts; it exists in experience. If "social life is the aggregate of innumerable Biographies" (5) as Carlyle wants us to believe, then, history proper is a record of these "innumerable biographies," with which Carlyle seems to imply imparts knowledge through experience. According to Carlyle, all types of disciplines and sciences gather at the footstool of History: the "Sentimentalist and Utilitarian, Sceptic and Theologician, with one voice advise us: Examine History, for it is 'Philosophy teaching by Experience" ("On History" 4). This proclamation is a tall order for history, but the crucial point Carlyle makes here is that history teaches by experience. The experience embedded in those innumerable biographies is the essence of history. In the wake of history's rise to a discipline, Carlyle saw what will be ultimately lost — the privilege of life

stories to speak (or to tell) in the name of the past over an attempt to totalize and label historical periods with the goal of presenting an idea of development and progress.

In "The Diamond Necklace," Carlyle proclaims history dead (86). He derides the growing practice of disciplinary historical writing, noting the degeneration of History "into empty invoice-lists of Pitched Battles and Changes of Ministry; or still worse, into 'Constitutional History,' or 'Philosophy of History,' or 'Philosophy teaching by Experience" (86). History is dead because it seeks to possess the past and constrain the past; it deadens the past as it denies the past's richness marked by countless individual experiences that make up the past or the very individual experience of the past's pastness, the experiences that interrupt linear historiography.

Carlyle alludes to the diminishing quality of biographical writing: "our very Biographies, how stiff-starched, foisionless, hollow!" (87). "Life-writing," concludes Carlyle, "has dwindled to the sorrowfullest condition" (87). Biographical writings, those "flowers of history," have wilted and do not offer a look into the past. The primary obstacle to the obscured vision into the past is the historian, whose "faculty [is] directed mainly at two objects: the Writing and the Writer, both of which are quite extraneous" (87). The historian's writing or method of interpreting the past and his own self gets in the way of properly reading the past: " 'Of all blinds that shut up men's vision, says one, 'the worst is Self'" (86), further describing the historian as a vain, self-centered scribe of the past, who repeatedly asks the wrong questions of the past: 'What did the Whigs have to say of it? What did the Tories? The Priests? the Freethinkers? Above all, What will my own listening circle say of *me* for what I say of it?" (87). The historian needs to take himself out of the equation of history writing and let the past speak for itself.

Carlyle depicts the notorious necklace made by the Parisian jeweler Boehmer. For Carlyle, the necklace functions as a peculiar emblem of historical discourse gone awry. Carlyle writes that the necklace, born out the far reaching and ambitious vision of Boehmer is "made" (92). But a necklace, explains Carlyle is not made in actuality: "*Made* we call it, in conformity with common speech: but properly it was not made; only, with more or less spirit of method, arranged and agglomerated. But to tell the various Histories of those various Diamonds, from the very first making of them; or even, omitting all the rest, from the very first digging of them in the far Indian mines!" (92). Carlyle immediately sets up his favorite binary of surface and depth: the surface of the necklace, which is "made" and the depth of the diamond's varied and long histories, their hidden stories: "Could these aged stones, the youngest of them Six Thousand years of age and upwards, but have spoken, — *there* were an Experience for Philosophy to teach by!" (92). The diamonds have lost their intricate value and meaning the moment Boehmer had them threaded: "but now, as we said, by little caps of gold, and daintiest rings of the same, they are all, being, so to say, enlisted under Boehmer's flag" (92). Carlyle extends this emblem to humanity: "In such inexplicable wise are Jewels, and Men also, and indeed all earthly things, jumbled together and assunder, and shovelled and wafted to and fro, in our inexplicable chaos of a World. This is what Boehmer called making his Necklace" (92-93). In much the same way, the disciplinary historian makes history, stringing together historical diamonds, fashioning a necklace of events and people, in the process omitting the stories, the experience each has to tell. To fashion a necklace of events, a thread of continuous history, requires the erasure of individual stories, or interruptions within the historical process. Carlyle's play with the emblem of the necklace coincides with Levinas' metaphor for the site of

interruption between the Said and Saying. In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas' recurring metaphor is a thread with knots along its length (25, 105, 156-171; Eaglestone 150). As Eaglestone points out, "these knots represent the interruption of the saying: a knot is made of the thread, dependent on the thread and yet not the thread [. . .] A knot is the interruption, the saying, that disrupts the said but is dependent on it" (150). In much the same way, the diamonds are knots alongside the length of the thread — the necklace represents a totality, which is always betrayed by the presence of the individual diamonds.

The ethics of historial knowledge or interpretation requires of the historian to tarry with the interruptions, to cut the thread and untie the knots. Carlyle's problem with "the Writing and the Writer" prefigures what Frank Ankersmit, in *The Sublime Historical Experience,* distinguishes between objective and subjective historical experience and what he calls sublime historical experience. The latter Ankersmit introduces as a third category in approaching the past, a category that will solve the problems inherent in the first two. The sublime historical experience seeks to cut the thread and expose the interruptions in history's apparent linearity.

What Ankersmit calls the sublime historical experience is a particular type of relation to the past that requires of us to separate notions of experience and truth or language. He argues for a shift from language to experience and challenges Richard Rorty's and most of structuralist and poststructuralist widely accepted formulations that prelingustic experience is impossible. Certainly, from the vantage point of contemporary philosophy and literary theory, such a claim is difficult to digest and accept, and Ankersmit is quite well aware of the problem and potential resistance. However, as Ankersmit is quick to point out, this experience is not pre-linguistic as much as it is "beyond language" (237). Thus, what Ankersmit actually proposes is not such a

radical shift from concerns of language, but a return to and an extention of eighteenth-century aesthetics and the sublimity of language. For Ankersmit, language itself is sublime when it transgresses its own limits; it is "an 'unsayable' presupposing language" (237). The application of Ankersmit's argument works well in furthering our understanding of what Carlyle had in mind when he set out to write historical narratives as Carlyle's language, its heavy reliance on complex tropological methods *is* sublime. Finally, Ankersmit's claim of the sublime historical experience has little to do with how historical truth is disseminated or constructed and much to do with how the historian experiences his subject matter, and how in turn the historian's experience generates an understanding of the past. While Ankersmit does not position his argument within an ethical relation, extending the concept of the sublime historical experience becomes useful in positing the ethical relation a historian should have the past.

Truth and the discernment of the past have little to do with one another, since it is not in facts, in facts that claim degrees of truth, that we need to look for the past. The past has to be envisioned and revisioned in an earnest discernment of the past's meaning and our experience of the past's meaning, an idea James Hogg plays with to an extreme. The past's meaning for Carlyle is not necessarily reducible to facts of the past, to dry records and meticulous documentation. Carlyle expresses a suspicion of positivist history his 1838 essay on Walter Scott:

> Historical novels have taught men this truth, which looks like a truism, and yet was as good as unknown to writers of history and others, till so taught: that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not protocols, state-papers, controversies and abstractions of men. Not abstractions were they, not

> diagrams and theorems; but men, in buff or other coats and breeches, with colour in the cheeks, with passions in their stomachs. (78)

History is not what we usually consider history — a coherent synthesis of various documents, "diagrams and theorems." Carlyle elevates the historical novel above history because the historical novel deals with the past, with life of "living men" and their experiences. History as record of "living men" is wonderfully put to practical use in Carlyle's 1833 essay "Count Cagliostro." Carlyle's cynical, humorous narrator at his best tackles the history of the "unparalleled Cagliostro" (29), who "was himself not so much a Liar as a Lie!" (31). The life of the quack of quacks nevertheless has a rich documented history, and Carlyle's historian dismisses all the histories written about him, taking particular offense with the history written by the "Roman Biographer." The implication is that the present histories are feeble records and attempts to document a life, which in essence cannot be documented. What is different about Carlyle's editor's history is the face to face handling of previous sources with a discerning eye: Carlyle's editor is not interested so much in what Cagliostro did as he is in drawing the picture of the man, whom history called Cagliostro. What the editor values in terms of history is the life experience of the human being, rather than a linear narrative of dates and events. Carlyle's editor refuses to reduce the human being to a historical fact.

The historical novel has something to teach history – what makes "history" is the lived experiences of people who populated the past. Thus, Carlyle does not view history as a science that is supposed to map out society's development and progress through a linear analysis of cause and effect, but as a space within which we can develop a sense of humanity and what it means to belong to humanity. Similarly, the notion of "universal history," to Carlyle, does not

suggest a view of humanity's progress; rather, history is universal because there is something binding the past to the present. Carlyle advocates the idea of universal history (no doubt related to our spiritual life) that can be discerned if we had enough honesty and understanding, enough to notice the organic filaments that bind. For it is precisely the want of honesty and understanding that bars us from ethically reading the past, and it is with honesty and understanding that we can translate history ethically.

3. Against "Assiduous Pedantry:"Ahistorical Historicism and Transcendental Aesthetics

In *Past and Present*, Carlyle's narrator derides "assiduous Pedantry" as digging up all sorts of "rubbish" from the past, naming it history until it is all "dim offensive dust-whirlwinds filling universal Nature" (51). Carlyle also describes the past as a "grey void" (51), an emptiness when clothed in historical facts and robbed of the "sun, hearth-fires, and candle-light" (51). Because Carlyle believes in a spiritual life built upon an idea of the past that binds humanity, it is worth asking how is it then that humans' whole spiritual life is built upon a grey void, the heat of which fails to reach us? Carlyle urges his readers to recognize the presence of the past, its residual afterlife in the present. This "spiritual life" upon which humans are grounded is the space where the afterlife of the past and present meet. Carlyle was genuinely concerned with the future perfectibility of humanity, yet rather than tying this future to large-scale political reform, he tied it to the perfectibility of the individual, believing that inner, moral rehabilitation in each individual needs to take place before political revision. But this inner moral reform of the individual is not to be understood in the Romantic sense of heightened individuality — it will, paradoxically, stem from a Carlylean awareness of what *Sartor's* Teufelsdröckh calls "organic

filaments" (185) — the web-like structure that binds "generation with generation" (*Sartor* 186). In my reading, Carlyle's moral reform is closely connected to one's experience of a sublime past. Here, Carlyle revises the Kantian sublime depending on an individual's solitary encounter to a more social experience. Like Kant, Carlyle claims that the answer to humanity's woes and discontents is not a morality that is grounded in a Christian God; rather, one should look for something god-*like:* in *Sartor,* a "Divine Idea," in his historical essays, the idea of "universal history." While the Kantian sublime experience takes place within the individual — any transcendental knowledge and self-realization depends on the individual's state of mind — the experience itself is motivated by a reality existing beyond the self. Carlyle calls for a sort of ethics of existence, an ethical recognition of something / someone other than the self: one's ethical responsibility first lies in humanity's development of an ethical relationship to the past and then to history. Carlyle will not simply imitate Kant's philosophical thought; rather, he will translate the sense of the sublime to a new realm — the Other — in and through which the past can be contemplated.[12]

Carlyle's insistence on an ethical relation to history has its point of departure (but not mere mirroring) in Kantian aesthetic theory, in which the sublime signifies a rupture or gap between the faculties of the imagination and reason. While these mental faculties collaborate in the analytic of the beautiful, in the analytic of the sublime the collaboration disappears. The sublime as such breaks totality. For Carlyle, within this moment of interuption the aesthetic and ethical face one another. Tracing this failure in the "mutual agreement" between the faculties that

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[12] I do not mean to privilege a moral aspect in the Kantian sublime although recent Kantian critics have done so. See Rudolphe Gashé's *The Idea of Form: Rethinking Kantian Aesthetics,* in which he claims that while the sublime remains within aesthetics, "it gestures toward something else, namely, practical reason and morality" (154). For other arguments concerning the moral aspect of the sublime, see Paul Guyer's "The Difficulty of the Sublime" in *Histories of the Sublime*.

happens at the site of the sublime experience exemplifies and illuminates the process of translating the past into historical discourse precisely because the act of translation commences at the point of such a rupture, at the moment of discord between the ideal past and the materiality of the text which needs to subsume the past and translate it into "history."

So far research has proved that Carlyle read Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), and it is generally agreed that he did not understand much of what he read. As Carlyle admits in a letter to Jane: "To speak truth, however, one of Scott's novels would suit me much better: last night, I found Kant was getting rather abstruse; and in one or two points he puzzled me so, that today I have not once opened him" (*CL* 4:137-139). To speak of a Kantian influence on Carlyle's notions of the sublime, then, is not a straightforward matter throughout.[13] While tracing influence is important, it precludes the examination of a complex history of the sublime in British aesthetic theory, with which Carlyle was familiar. When considering Carlyle's relationship to Kant and German Idealism, readers need to negotiate between both British and German aesthetic theory as the two converge in Carlyle's texts. As Ralph Jessop argues in *Carlyle and Scottish Thought,* Carlyle's texts are a space where German thought and Scottish philosophy intertwine, the specters of influence ranging from Thomas Reid and David Hume (whom Kant read and reacted against) through Sir William Hamilton, with whom Carlyle was intimately acquainted.[14] Hume in writing about the sublime "makes an important and early case for the historic

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[13] The wide and extensive scholarship examining the influence of German thought and Kantian philosophy on Carlyle has been consistent in proclaiming that while there is evidence of Kantian influence, it is mediocre. I point the reader to the seminal studies conducted with the purpose of examining influence: Hill Shine's "Carlyle and the German Philosophy Problem During the Year 1826-1827." See also Charles Frederick Harrold's "Carlyle's Interpretation of Kant" and his later full length study *Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834*. For a more recent study, see Rosemary Ashton's *The German Idea: Four English Writers and Reception of German Thought 1800-1860*.

[14] For more on Carlyle's relationship with Hamilton, see Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, James Anthony Froudes' *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life 1795-1835*, and Fred Kaplans's biography *Thomas Carlyle.*

imagination" (Ashfield and de Bolla196). Hume's sublime considers both time and space, enabling Carlyle to reinterpret Kant through an historicist lens. Carlyle may have been an "instinctive Kantian" (Sorensen 55), but not entirely. In the second book of *The Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant describes the sublime as found in a formless object and marked by "boundlessness" (102). The sublime surpasses the limits of our imagination and disrupts our reason. This experience of limit and the aesthetic judgment it gives rise to are "universally valid for every subject" (101). While Kant sees the sublime as purely an aesthetic category, Carlyle finds that an aesthetic producing "subjective universality" has an ethical component.

Kant himself hints at such a component. Because we realize our incapacity to attain the Idea (to fully comprehend that which evokes feelings of the sublime), we respect "our own destination" (119). Kant is not very clear as to what our destination is but implies that it is something beyond our reason and imagination, some transcendental ideal, something god-like. We experience pain when faced with the sublime experience. Recognizing the existence of a "beyond," we reach the very primal image of the Transcendent.

The perception of the beyond depends on the Imagination's failure: at the moment when the Imagination extends itself to attempt at comprehending that which can at most only be apprehended, the Imagination fails: "the imagination reaches its maximum, and, in striving to surprass it, sinks back to itself" (112). The transcendent, the Imagination finds itself faced with "an abyss in which it fears to lose itself" (120). Space and time are annihilated. The pain we feel at our incapacity to understand the edge of episteme places us in a particular position of humiliation and respect, as when Kant describes the religious sublime experience: "subjection, abasement, and a feeling of complete powerlessness, is a fitting state of mind in the presence of

such an object" (128). For Carlyle, this state of mind is a form of reverence, which leads to moral understanding.

We can see how Carlyle amplifies the ethical aspects of the sublime by contrasting sublime images in Kant's *Critique* and Carlyle's *Sartor*. Kant explains the sublime in strictly formal terms, stressing its aesthetic nature by asking us to see those objects we call sublime "as the poets do" (138). Kant explains that when we refer to, for example, the sight of the ocean as sublime, "we must not think of it as we [ordinarily] do, as implying all kinds of knowledge (that are not contained in immediate intuition)" (137). Instead, "to call the ocean sublime we must regard it as poets do, merely by what strikes the eye; if it is at rest, as a clear mirror of water bounded by the heaven; if it is restless, as an abyss threatening to overwhelm everything" (137-38). Contrast Kant's formalist aproach to what Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh proclaims in *Sartor*: "Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tost Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: Let there be Light!" (146). Carlyle's German philosopher's language also echoes Kant's description of a sublime "starry heaven" which should only be regarded as a "distant, all embracing vault" (137) but whereas the vault in Kant's rendering offers nothing but its materialism— "merely by what strikes the eye" — in Carlyle the "skyey vault with its everlasting Luminaries" in fact pushes Teufelsdröckh from the center of indifference to the everlasting yea.[15] The eye needs to have vision beyond materiality. Carlyle's transcendental philosopher's eyes acquire vision and see through the "wasteful chaos," something "God-announcing" — the ethical (146).

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[15] For a compelling reading of Kant's sublime aesthetics as materialist, see Paul de Man's "Kant's Materialism" in *Aesthetic Ideology* (1996), in which de Man proclaims Kant's aesthetic judgment as an instance of "radical formalism:" "Kant's looking at the world just as one sees it ('wie man ihn sieht') is an absolute, radical formalism that entertains no notion of reference or semiosis" (128). Even more powerfully, de Man states that "the dynamics of the sublime mark the moment when the infinite is frozen into the materiality of stone [. . .] a complete loss of the symbolic" (127).

Carlyle's "wasteful chaos" is a rupture between the past and present and one must acquire the vision to see through it. By contrast, to Kant, the full subjective universality of the sublime experience will take place when time and space are annihilated. Although Carlyle echoes Kant in *Sartor* when he asks us to "admit Space and Time to their due rank as Forms of Thought," in the very same sentence he tells us that even if we assign to space and time "their undue rank of Realities" (198) – the same conclusion emerges: we should recognize how their "thin disguises hide from us the brightest God-effulgences! (199). Time, the historical present moment, often hides from us the past, which I read here as "God-effulgences," the "Divine Idea" or "universal history, " or, finally, as I will show, the Levinisian face of the immemorial past. In *Sartor's* chapter aptly titled "Organic Filaments," Teufelsdröckh starts weaving the image of history as a web-like structure that binds all humanity: "wondrous truly are the bonds that unite us one an all" (185), and not only are an "existing generation of men [. . .] so woven together" but "generation with generation" (186) — the present with the past, the past with the present. Carlyle's editor closes the chapter with Teufelsdröckh's question: "is not Man's History, and Men's History, a perpetual Evangile?" and an imperative request: "Listen, and for organ-music thou wilt ever, as of old, hear the Morning Stars sing together" (186). In the following "stupendous" chapter (187), Carlyle's editor makes us listen to the "organ-music" – with all its strong, overpowering and at times discordant vibrations. Carlyle's editor writes that the symbols we call "Time and Space" are "perplexing and bewildering," but the German philosopher "resolutely grapples" with these and "victoriously rends [them] asunder," and he finally envisions "the interior, celestial Holy of Holies" (187). The Kantian eye that only sees the material is here transformed to an eye that looks "fixedly on Existence" (187).

The passage remarkably reflects the limitlessness the editor describes in "Editorial Difficulties," in which he explains the inherent difficulties in editing Teufelsdröckh's "extensive volume" (8). The editor describes the volume as a work of "boundless, almost formless contents, a very Sea of Thought; neither calm nor clear, if you will; yet wherein the toughest pearl-diver may dive into his utmost depth, and return not only with sea-wreck but with true orients" (8). This description brings to mind the descriptives Kant uses to explain the sublime object. The metaphor of a sea of "utmost depth" to which the editor will dive also calls to mind the ocean as the prime example of a sublime object in Kantian aesthetics. However, while in Kant to call the ocean sublime necessitates that we "regard it as the poets do" (138) and not extend to it "all kinds of knowledge" (138), Carlyle's sea depths are neither "calm nor clear" but will produce results: among the ruins, the diver may bait "true orients." The term signifies at once "orientation" or "origins" and "exotic treasures," the unfamiliar — the Other. As such these "true orients" are the stuff that make Carlyle's "true fiction," a fiction that is grounded in the material but that gestures towards the ideal. It the "true orients" that rely on an annihilation of time and space.

The metaphor of sea depicts an impenertable body of murky water. Parallel but different to when the observer experiences the Kantian sublime, the initial disabling feeling, the experience of loss and pain surface until one "looks fixedly onto Existence," or when one can rescue "true orients" rather than "ship wrecks" from the depths of the sea. To look fixedly onto existence is to see through its material manisfestations to its transcendent essences. This idea echoes the earlier formulation in the chapter entitle "Pure Reason," of looking fixedly on Clothes (51). Teufelsdröckh first proclaims that "Matter, were it never so despicable, is Spirit, the

manifestation of spirit" (51). The German philosopher further proclaims that "the beginning of all Wisdom is to look fixedly on Clothes [. . .] till they become transparent. 'The Philosopher,' says the wisest of this age, 'must station himself in the middle'" (51). Like the philosopher, the historian too needs to stand in the middle, at an atemporal ground zero where the past and present will converge. All that is material veils its immaterial essence, and such a view may be applied to historical discourse, which is the material embodiment of the immaterial past. In "The Diamond Necklace," Carlyle revisits the idea of "looking fixedly into Existence" as he chides the current historians for not "looking fixedly at the *Thing*"and for not "first of all, and beyond all, endeavouring to *see* it, and fashion a living Picture of it" (87). Instead of discerning the live essense of the past, the historian fashions a "wretched politco-metaphysical Abstraction" out of the past, while its essense, "the Thing[,] lies shrouded, invisible, in thousandfold hallucinations, and foreign air-images" (87). The Levinisian Said of the historian's language seeks to overpower and totalize the Saying of the past; the "wretched politico-metaphysical Absraction" delimits the boundlessness of the past.

Still, Carlyle's annihilation of time is ultimately in the service of time. To look fixedly onto existence is apparently to recognize that history is a "volume written in celestial hieroglyphs" that needs to be deciphered by annihilating the space and time that separates the historian from her subject. Existence is transcendent and intuitive. Yet Carlyle does not annihilate time in the same way Kant does; he desires to abolish boundaries set by time only in order for us to be able to approach history, to immerse or to translate ourselves fully into the past, to stand within the past and observe it from its own vantage point. We can, Teufelsdröckh claims, "rend [space and time] asunder for moments, and look through" (186). The type of annihilation

Teufelsdröckh has in mind is a fantastic journey that would enable us to converse "face to face with Paul or Seneca" (191). For Teufelsdröckh, history set forth by "Institutes and Academies of Science" collapses, and an ahistorical historicism uveils itself: "the curtains of Yesterday drop down, the curtains of To-morrow roll up; but Yesterday and To-morrow both are" (192). In this semantic moment of the present form of being, we come face to face with "Existence." This is the grey void unveiled, the rupture in the historical process, a Levinisian interuption and the command of the face, where we look at our predecessor and recognize the ghosts of our past. Teufelsdröckh hauntingly declares: "Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand million walking the earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once. O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts" (194-95).

4. "Realized Ideals:" The Ideology of the Symbol, Historical Excess and the Materiality of History

Perhaps the most well known ghosts who walk through Carlyle's texts are those that he calls forth in *The French Revolution*. It is true that *Sartor* is grounded in an ahistorical historicism, or as Ruth ap Roberts claims in "Carlyle and the Aesthetic Movement," that the historicism "that is basic to *Sartor*" is one of "perpetual disorienting flux of change [. . .] and the reaching forward to stability in the fellowship of humanity" (59). How much more so is the historicism of Carlyle's monumental *The French Revolution*? In a review appearing in the *Literary Gazette, and Journal of the Belles Lettres* on 27 May 1837, an anonymous reviewer visciously attacks Carlyle's *The French Revolution*: " Of this strange work we hardly know how

to speak [. . .] He calls his performance "The French Revolution;" but it is more than that: it is a triple revolution: — 1st, allowing the French Revolution to be itself *one*; 2d, there is the Revolution of Mr. Carlyle, *two*; and 3d, the Revolution of the English language, *three!*" (49). The reviewer first calls Carlyle's work a "performance," and even if we do not proceed to examine Carlyle's narrative as perfomative utterance, the fact that the reviewer marks it as a performance actually works well with Carlyle's own insistance that "we do nothing but enact History" (*OH* 4)[16]. The review then proceeds to call Carlyle himself a revolution, which perhaps Carlyle would not mind, and presents a rather humorous image of the Sage of Chelsea taking Victorian London by storm. I am most interested, however, in the reviewer's third claim: "the Revolution of the English language," which the review explains in the following manner: "classical absurdities; multitudes of new-coined words; and concoted phrases; illustrations which darken, and expositions that perplex" (50). Such " hundered other bewildering follies crush the sense of this work in every page," and the reviewer laments "the perversity which has marred all the better qualities of a writer like this" (50). Langauge perversely becomes an impediment to meaning, not only violating the linearity of English thought but also the linearity of English historiography. The reviewer has a problem not only with this "Revolutionary English," but also with Carlyle's historical narrative as such: "There is nothing like a history of the events which took place; but, instead, there is a series of rhapsodical snatches" (50). The reviewer is very clear on what he expects history to offer: diachrony. Such a discordant view of the historical process certainly cannot coexist with the idea of social stability and a rhetoric of social and cultural coherence and progress. Through the reviewer's rejection we reach the pivotal point of

[16] The privilege of action unfolds throughout the *French Revolution* as well: "Indeed, what is this Infinite of Things itself, which men name Universe, but an Action, a sum-total of Actions and Activities? ... The All of Things is an infinite conjugation of the verb *To do*" (331-32)

Carlyle's own historical vision: 1) there is *nothing* in a history of events, and 2) langauge must transform into what the past dictates.

There is nothing in a history of events. To impose order on an otherwise disordered past, the narrative through which the historian tells the stories or actions of the past follows a linear pattern wherein one can discern the origin and trace the chain of causes and effects. Hayden White, following contemporary historiography, asks " Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles, and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in the very beginning? Or does it present itself more in the forms that the annals and chronicles suggest, either as mere sequence without beginning or end or as a sequence of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude" (24)? Carlyle foresees exactly this problem that contemporary historians deal with – how can "real" events be expected to follow the formal pattern or structure of a story, and assertively claims: "our 'chains,' or 'chainlets, of 'causes and effects,' which we so assiduously track through certain hand-breaths of years and square miles, when the whole is a broad deep Immensity, and each atom is 'chained' and complected with all!" ("On History" 8). Elliot L. Gilbert rightly argues that Carlyle rejects "the view that human history consists of a series of events linked by superficial causality." According to Gilbert, for Carlyle the only "way to preserve and communicate that history is to present those events as far as possible in the order in which they actually occurred and to look with skepticism upon all but logical explanations of the connections between them" (432). Therefore, for Carlyle, the true historian needs to transcend the Drysasdust historian, who "could produce nothing but the most trivial historical accounts" (Gilbert 433). "Narrative is linear," writes Carlyle "Action is solid" (8). Dryasdust will

let himself be engulfed by the linearity of narrative; the narrative structure will overcome the historian. But the true historian will overcome narrative. Carlyle's historian personas understand how to read the past; therefore they are able to forge a translation of the immaterial past into a material yet ethical history. Carlyle's editorial personas who encounter historical documents are always able to gaze through the 'diagrams and theorems" into the life of men. In Carlylean true fiction, action that takes place beyond narrative and language. Gilbert's argument emphasizes that there is anachronism in Carlyle's prophetic art, a rejection of "time itself as the key to an understanding of man and his experience" (433). Gilbert sees this rejection primarily in Carlyle insisting that "man's perennial obligation [is] to wake hismelf out of the nightmare of history and chronology into the reality of myth and eternity" (433). Thus, Carlyle's history becomes not ony anachronistic but even more so atemporal.

According to Mark Cummings, Carlyle "insistently avoids narrative in favor of action" and "his histories achieve their maximum effect when they resist chronological or narrative ordering" (113). In *The French Revolution*, Carlyle's narrator remarks: "But, on the whole, we will remark here that this business of Louis looks altogether different now, as seen over the Seas and at a distance of forty-four years, from which it looked then, in France, and struggling confused all around. For indeed it is a most lying thing that same Past Tense always: so beautiful, sad, almost Elysian-sacred, 'in the moonlight Memory,' it seems, and *seems* only" (574). Carlyle both highlights problems in perspective: "the distance of forty-four years" provides an altered picture of Louis' France and problems that stem from imposing temporal order on narrative. The atemporality is noted in Carlyle's insistence that while narrative is linear, "Action is solid." There is not one single cause and effect; the past is like a solid mass, a whole whose various parts act

on and react to each other. Thus, the very idea of "truth" is complicated to the extent that "truth" cannot be traced to one single origin down a signifying chain of events. Truth is buried in the solidity of "action," in the complex interplay of historical events. The linear model of the historical process is diachronic, and does not reflect the actual complexity of the interdepedence of events. Each event exists in a complex, simultaneous interplay with the others. The interplay and interdependence of historical events is obscure in itself and made even more obscure when transferred into text, when the referential event-system is textualized or (re)constructed through language — when the past tense attempts to assert mastery over historical events. The inability to contain the past or to possess the past through language is present in Carlyle's metaphor for history or, more precisely, the historical manuscript: the palimpsest.

History, Carlyle claims, that "complex Manuscript [. . .] which is a palimpsest" (*OH* 8) can only be interpreted. Through the palimpsest metaphor, Carlyle shows how language – writing — buries the actual material event. History as palimpsest immediately implies that history or the historical process is not linear. The palimpsest metaphor also breaks time, and as different textual temporalities are recorded on one material, the temporality of the texts is effaced. Consider the richness of the palimpsest metaphor: we are supposed to envision a historical manuscript upon which there is an intricate web of commentary upon commentary, each commentary effacing its previous "original," where one story folds into another, the origin obscured but never quite lost, always present however out of reach of complete deciphering. We are left with a manuscript that offers only interpretations upon interpretations. The palimpsest metaphor is one of excess, historical excess, where causes and effects are inscribed and reinscribed. The palimpsest is also a textual ruin, a material upon which past and present

commentaries intertwine, effacing one another, the commentary of the present always nearly destroying – ruining – the underwriting of the past. The palimpsest metaphor is also conscious of the inevitable transformation of the present commentary into the scriptio inferior – the underwriting. What is legible at this present time, what is overwriting the past, will soon become a trace underneath a new inscription. In the excess of inscription, historical discourse calls itself into question as it appears to be a discourse of competing voices that are in constant danger of falling mute in the very act of utterance.

The metaphor of the palimpsest becomes a formal structuring principle through his use of multiple narrators to relate historical events. In "Count Cagliostro," Carlyle's narrator is in constant interpretative battle with a biographer whom he alternately calls the "Roman Biographer," or "Inquisition Biographer," always reinterpreting and overwriting events, which the Roman biographer documented. Certainly, the "Roman" or "Inquisition" biographer needs to automatically raise associations with Catholic dogmatisim and the Inquisition, with its corrupted zealous quest for "fact" and torturous imposition of sacred truth. Carlyle's biographer comments on Cagliostro's apparent trip to Messina, where Cagliostro is to have meet a "certain Althotas" with whom he voyages to Alexandria in Egypt (45) and notes: "The foolish Inquisition Biographer is uncertain whether the Althotas was a Greek or a Spaniard: but unhappily the prior question is not settled, whether he was at all" (45). Later, the new biographer dismisses, with a simple declarative "we pass over these" (47), the Inquisition Biographer's "descriptive catalogue of all the successive Cullies," which the Biographer has furnished with "painful scientific accuracy" (47). We find in these two complaints voiced against the Inquisition Biographer's

practice, the fundamental reactions against history grounded in empiricism: positivist history neither asks the right questions of the past nor focuses on what really matters within the past.

The reoccurring image of the Carlylean editor who is always overwhelmed by the countless amounts of historical records and documents also discloses the palimpsest nature of historical discourse. These documents, which are not palimpsests proper, still represent the layers of historicaly, comprising competing commentary, textualized events pitted against one another, vast collections of documents written about a single event from multiple perspectives, dating from different historical periods:

> The present inquirer, in obstinate investigation of a phenomenon so noteworthy, has searched through the whole not inconsiderable circle with his tether (of circumstances, geographical position, trade, health, extent of money capital) enables him to describe: and, sad to say, with the most imperfect results. He has read Books in various languages and jargons; feared not to soil his fingers, hunting through ancient dusty Magazines, to sicken his heart in any labyrinth of iniquity and imbecility; nay he had not grudged to dive even into the infectious *Mémoires de Casanova,* for a hint or two, – could he have found that work, which, however, most British Librarians make a point of denying that they possess. A painful search [. . .] The quantity of discoverable Printing about Cagliostro (so much being burnt) is now not great; nevertheless in frightful proportion to the quantity of information given. ("Count Cagliostro" 30)

The editor is faced with excessive textual ruins, a history woven through multiple discourse, incomplete documents and records, documents that lead astray, and most frustrating of

all, knowledge that information exists but is "burnt" and obliterated forever from the plane of the history making. In Carlyle's texts, these excessive textual ruins appear and reappear as images of rubbish through which a historian rumages, searching for a remote truth: "to reach the truth, or even any honest guess at the truth, the immensities of rubbish must be sifted, contrasted, rejected: what grain of historical evidence may lie at the bottom is then attainable" ("Diamond Necklace" 86).

In a letter to Mary Rich, Carlyle complained that "poor Oliver lies like grains of gold dust scattered under continents of cinders and rubbish," lamenting that "our greatest man" is "irrecoverable lost to History!" (*CL* 12:345). Carlyle makes a crucial point here about the past and its unherent unknowability — there will always be something knowable about the unknowable past, but once its historical traces are "burnt," the past retreats further into oblivion. And yet even in such vast oblivion, there is a "frightful proportion of the quantity of information," and the editor's daunting task is to sift through the information. Carlyle returns to the image of the editor faced with the vastness of historical inquiry in his later *Past and Present,* which perhaps offers his most known overwhelmed editor who sits before "confused Paper-Masses," hoping to find within them "some glimmering light" and "human soul" (42). For the editor of historical manuscripts, the historical event as fact is not as important as discerning a "human soul," the apparitions of the past, within the historical event. The implication, then, is that the human soul, the ghost of the past, transcends the material conditions of historical events, as the palimpsest's *scriptio inferior* haunts both the material of the manuscript and the materiality of the text, bursting through the subsequent overwriting.

The excess of the palimspsest and the anachronism and atemporality which Gilbert assigns to Carlyle becomes more fascinating when aligned with the Levinisian face and what Levinas calls the "the immemorial past" (*TO* 112), which he assigns to the face and its traces. The encounter with the face may be read as an encounter with a past that both passes into irretrievability and refuses to be forgotten. In this sense, the Levinisian face acts as a palimpsest. According to Lingis, Levinas' "bold thesis is that the relationship with alterity is the original case of this affliction of the present of consciousness with a past that it cannot render present, represent" (xxvi). For Levinas this past is "pre-original" (*OB* 10); it is past which cannot be "recuperated by memory and history" (*OB* 10). "The apparition of the other person in the face-to-face relationship opens up a massive dimension of temporal relationships, involving not only the other person and its time, but also the time of others who are unborn and deceased" (Hutchens 72), and we can, then, read the Levinisian face as the site of the past, the face that contains the traces of Carlylean "innumerable biographies." For Levinas the significance of an immemorial past is linked to my responsibility for the other person, my "participation in the history of humanity, in the past of others, who 'regard me'" (*TO* 112).

An immemorial past which cannot be represented violates the very idea of linear narrative. Yet as Levinas points out, "Western humanity has been conscious of a single and universal historical ordering, one that unfolds with a view to a culmination" (*TO* 124). For Levinas such a view of history appears to be irresponsible because it is founded on a conception of freedom within which "everything is possible and everything is permitted" (*T0* 124). The freedom implicated in this historical ordering is a freedom "with which no memory interferes" and "upon which no past weighs" (*TO* 124). This history then has reduced everything outside

the present moment to the present moment, denying the past's alterity. Carlyle harbored the same concern with freedom when thinking about revolutions and sudden grand scale changes within societal structure. The entire *French Revolution* is ridden with anxiety about the new replacing the old. Carlyle's straightforward analysis of the Revolution reflects a fear of excessive freedom, freedom not based on responsibility for the other, not weighed down by the past: the "French Revolution means [. . .] open violent Rebellion, and Victory of disimprisoned Anarchy against corrupt worn-out Authority" (*FR* 179). Anarchy "breaks prison, bursts up from the infinite Deep, and rages uncontrollable;" Like the Kantian image of the sea, this sea of revolutionary events is sublime. This Revolution is a "great Phenomenon: nay it is a *transcendental* one, overstepping all rules and experience; the crowning Phenomenon of our Modern Time" (179-80).

One way to understand the human soul or the ghost of the past — the essence of humanity transcending material conditions of history — is by looking at what Carlyle has to say concerning the symbol. His discussions of the symbol in *Sartor* foreground the text as at once concerned with aesthetics and aesthetic theory, but the aesthetic of the Carlylean symbol is intricately bound to ethics and our relation to the past. It is in the containment of the symbol that history waits to burst and overflow in excess. According to Carlyle, it is through symbols that human beings live or fashion themselves, and thus the symbol has an important function within the historical process. Underneath these material signs, however, lies always something immaterial, and Carlyle insists on the dual nature of the sign, its function to conceal and reveal. Carlyle energetically explains this idea in *Sartor*: "In a Symbol there is concealment and yet revelation: here, therefore, by Silence and by Speech acting together, comes a doubled significance. And if both Speech be itself high, and the Silence fit and noble, how expressive will

their union be!" (166). The symbol seeks to stabilize the disparate energies of that which is immaterial and material, to provide a totalization that masters the historical process as it unfolds.

To best examine and understand Carlyle's overall historical project, we need to look at his essays that offer social commentary of the present. In one of his first political and social essays, "The Signs of the Times" (1829), appearing in the *Edinburgh Review,* Carlyle, as historian and historical subject, witnessing the rapid changes taking place on both the socio-economic and socio-political plane, called on his contemporaries to observe how history works by paying attention to symbols and the construction of symbols. In addition, he calls attention to the issue of temporality when desiring to interpret one's historical moment, arguing that to properly discern the present one must immerse oneself completely into the present moment: "Let us instead of gazing idly into the obscure distance, look calmly around us, for a little, on the perplexed scene where we stand" (59), which is analogous to what Carlyle urges the historian to do when writing history.

The invitation to look into the present, to read the present, from the vantage point of the present marks yet again a central concern with how temporality plays into representation and the very understanding of the historical event. Consider "Baillie the Covenanter," these "two massive Octavos" (232). The massiveness and materiality of a historical manuscript is put forward immediately. He praises the editor, one Mr. Laing, who "has exhibited his usual industry, sagacity, correctness, in this case; and done his work well. The notes are brief, illuminative, ever in the right place" (232). Mr. Laing has avoided the all too ready trap for an "antiquarian editor to seize too eagerly any chance or pretext for pouring-out his long-bottled antiquarian lore, and drowning his text" (232-33). While the editor stays clear of the text and does not marr the

original with editorials, Carlyle has much to say about Baille himself and his work, and, of course, it is not all positive: "His Book is like the hasty, breathless, confused *talk* of a man, looking face to face on that great whirl of things. A wiser man — would have talked *more* wisely" (233). While it is "confused talk," Caryle quickly qualifies his judgement by asserting that "poor Baillie wrote not for us at all, but for the Spang and the Presbytery of Irvine, with no eye to us!" (234), thus acknowledging the difference between the temporalities of the past and present and his position of someone reading from a different perpective.

According to Carlyle, each historical age can be read in terms of signs, his own age – England of the mid 1800s, being the age of mechanics. Carlyle's reading of a historical period in terms of a sign marks his reading of the present (or history) as material – he is well aware of the contingent historical moment, the material construction of culture. It is here that we encounter perhaps the seed of the Teufelsdröckhian clothes-philosophy. During Carlyle's Age of Machinery (*Signs* 59), the material symbol reigns, subduing morality: "Mechanism has now struck its roots down into man's most intimate, primary sources of conviction" (74). Carlyle sternly points out that "men have lost their belief in the Invisible, and believe, and hope, and work only in the visible; or to speak it in other words: This is not a Religious age. Only the material, the immediately practically, not the divine and spiritual, is important to us" (74). By 1829, Carlyle sees his historical period as one marked by outwardness and material concerns –- a prolepsis of ensuing modernity, the modern which is, according to Levinas who traces the origin of such modernity to Hegel, "constituted by the consciousness of a certain definitively acquired freedom" (*TO* 124).

In the mechanical age of vast machine building, Carlyle argues that "it is through Symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being" (*Sartor* 164). Such "Digestive, Mechanic life" can only understand history, according to Teufelsdröckh, as nothing but a series of Utilitarian "calculated 'Motives,'" or digested emblems of "Christianities, Chivalries, Reformations, and Marseillese Hymns, and Reigns of Terror" (163). For Carlyle's professor, symbols are ultimately constructions that tend to "wax old" (165). Time, history, "defaces" and "desecrates" symbols (165)[17]. Symbolic worth, then, is connected to a particular historical moment. While we need to look at the symbol, we also need to look beneath its material representation to properly discern humanity's relation to the past. As Teufelsdröckh explains: "'The beginning of all Wisdom is to look fixedly on Clothes, or even with armed eyesight, till they become transparent" (*SR* 51).

5. The Ghostly Face of the Past: Alterity and Translation

In *Sartor*, exiting the center of indifference and waking up to the evelasting yea, where clothes become transparent and the "eye [has] vision" (146) marks an ethical moment for Carlyle's philosopher. "The first preliminary moral Act," writes Teufelsdröckh, "Annihilation of Self (*Selbst-tödtung*), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed" (139). Such self annihaltion, or to translate this as annihilation of the present, is

[17] The opening chapters of the *French Revolution* dismantle the "Realized Ideal" of the monarch. Carlyle's historian begins his historical narrative by immediately setting up the dialectic between the symbol's intrinsic and extrinsic value and the symbol's ultimate decay. Louis XV's title of *Bien-aimé* (well-beloved) has seen the last of its intrinsic value. He describes the time in 1747 when Louis XV fell ill and "at the news of this, Paris, in all terror, seemed a city taken by storm: the churches resounded with supplications and groans; the prayers of priests and people were every moment interrupted by their sobs" (3). It was, the historian writes, "from an interest so dear and tender that this Surname of *Bien-aimé* fashioned itself" (3). It is now 1774, and as Carlyle's historian writes, Louis XV lies ill "but in how great altered circumstances now! Churches resound not with excessive groanings; Paris is stoically calm; sobs interrupt no prayers, for indeed none are offered" (3). The symbol of the well-beloved monarch has fashioned itself and has now reached its moment of unmaking.

required from one who wants to read the past ethically, and it this annihilation of the self / the present that permits Carlyle to finally write two books at once, a task he felt incapable of earlier in the summer of 1842. *Past and Present* is precisely a two-in-one book, a vision of historical simultaneity and excess. Thus, it is Carlyle's act of reading Jocelin's chronicle that inspires his particular historical vision in *Past and Present,* which propells the ethical momentum. The ethical recognition of a web of humanity's interconnectedness is further developed in *Past and Present.* Just the title alone juxtaposes places these temporalities in a face to face position. The very structure of the text has something of the palimpsest about it, the four sections of the text, "The Proem," "The Ancient Monk," "The Modern Worker," and "Horoscope," resembling the different underwritings and overwritings of a palimpsest.

Using Levinas to read Carlyle, we can see that in Carlyle's "grey void" the past becomes an Other, and as such calls upon us an ethical responsibility. Such othering is the goal of translation; it is through the othering of the translator's language, the admittence of the foreign language to encase the translator's language that pure language figures forth. In "Carlyle's Early Study of German, 1819-1821," Rodger Tarr and Ian Campbell claim that "Carlyle's initial preoccupation with Gernam as language marks, then, the most crucial phase in the development of his philosophical and moral character" (20). Thus, we may learn something about Carlyle's historical vision from his study of languages and notions on translating, so I propose we bring the two discussions together. The historian like the translator, I argue, needs to decipher the tune of the past and subsquently translate the past into history.

I want first to think of translation in terms of language and Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay "The Task of the Translator." Benjamin begins his examination of translation by stating a

somewhat uncomfortable assertion: "Art [. . .] posits man's physical and spiritual existence, but in none of its works is it concerned with his response" (69). Carlye's frustration with historians prefigures Benjamin's sentiment: Carlyle repeatedly complains about historians being deaf to what he wants to hear from the past and blind to what he wants to see within the past. If the past is to be translated for posterity, the historian must, like Benjamin's translator find "pure langauge" or the Carlylean "tune" by which to make it known, by which to modulate it for the present.

For Carlyle, translation was a serious task. In his "State of German Literature," he derides the current state of translations: "Translators are the same faithless and stolid race that have ever been: the particle of gold they bring us over is hidden from all but the most patient eye, among shiploads of yellow sand and sulphor" (35). The task of the translator is to bring forth the "particle of gold" and ideally not only to a discerning eye, but even, it is implied, to the casual reader. In his letters, Carlyle frequently gave advice to translators on how to translate and emphasized that a good translation will capture the tune of the original. Writing to John S. Dwight, Carlyle explains: "The tune of a Poem, especially it be a Goethe's Poem, is the soul of the whole; round which all, the very thoughts no less than the words, shapes and modulates itself: the tune is to be got hold of before anything else can be got" (*CL* 10: 206-207). Thus, the task of the translator is to locate the tune and expose the poem's soul. By evoking the soul of a poem, Carlyle places the translator in a binding ethical position — the translator becomes responsible for the original work's soul and its preservation. This ethical response is motivated in how one reads, and we should keep in mind the inseparability of translation and reading. In a later letter to Dwight, Carlyle praises Dwight's translation: "With great pleasure I recognise in

you one merit, the rarest of all in Goethe's Translators, yet the first condition, without which every other merit is impossible: that of understanding your original." The translator must first understand the original text —- decipher its tune, unveil its soul, before he can translate. He continues to praise Dwight for successfully being able to "behold and see the lineaments" of Goethe's "great mind" (*CL* 11: 56-58).

For Benjamin, a proper translation will emerge through pure language, and there is something of the Carlylean tune in Benjamin's pure language of translation. According to Benjamin, "a translation issues from the original — not so much from its life as from its afterlife" (71). We can paraphrase Benjamin and apply this to historical discourse and its translation of the past into representation: history issues from the past — not so much from its life as from its afterlife. The past is the original, but as Benjamin shows the translation always come much later in life, and ultimately "no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original" (73). According to Benjamin, the original, or in our case the past, undergoes a change in the afterlife (73), primarily because the translator will work within a different cultural context and possbily not recognize the cultural references the original text alludes to. Here, I cannot fully translate this argument to Carlyle. For Carlyle, the past does not undergo a change in the sense that it transforms itself and disfigures itself through time (this is history's job when it mis-translates the past); rather, the past, in Carlyle's vision, paradoxically remains eternal and unchangeable by being fluid and in motion. The historian, however, operates in a different cultural context than her object of study. There is a significant temporal rupture between the historian and the subject of history. Carlyle, while insisting on an ideal past, is aware of temporal determinism. However, a point of agreement between Benjamin's notion of

translation and what I claim Carlyle does when he translates the past into history is the realization that, as Benjamin claims, “all translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages. An instant and final rather than a temporary and provisional solution of this foreignness remains out of reach of mankind; at any rate it eludes any direct attempt” (73). Historical discourse, when it is confident in its employment of language is blind to this fact. Historical discourse relies on the confidence of translating the past fully. According to Benjamin, “the language of translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds. For it signifies a more exalted language than its own and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien” (73). While Benjamin in fact glorifies the task of the translator, the language Benjamin uses here to explain translation is negative: translation appears to appropriate the original, it alienates the original, implying it does some sort of violence to the original.

Similarly, historical discourse ultimately alienates the past, violates the immateriality of the past as it seeks to materialize it through its own language. How does a historian, conditioned by his material historical period, translate the past into history and remain true to the material conditions of the past? We can further pose the same question in Levinisian terms: in the approach of the Other to the Same, how does the Same refrain from reducing the Other to itself? For Benjamin the translator faces the same tension when positing the original text with the potential translation. Levinas sought an answer in what he called ethical langauge, which vascilates between the Said and Saying. Benjamin will find a solution in “pure language”.

Translation always remains engulfed in a dialectic: the tension between freedom and fidelity (79). The same tension faces the writer who chooses the past as his subject. How much

does one or can one remain faithful to a past that is essentially unknowable? How much free play of the imagination is allowed in representation of the past? Fidelity towards the original text requires complete absorption of the translator; the translator must remain loyal to the original language. But fidelity stands in the way of freedom, and freedom, according to Benjamin, is necessary for the proper interaction between the translator's language and the original language. Pure language can only be liberated if the translator exercises his own freedom. Benjamin finds a solution for translation: "the task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect (*Intentio*) upon language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original" (76, Benjamin's emphasis). A translation needs to echo the original. For Carlyle, history needs to echo the past: the historian neither can nor should seek the "truth" in the past; the past cannot offer a coherent meaning; rather the historian needs to echo the past. Or to put in Levinisian terms: the historian needs to unveil the saying in the said of the historical record. This echoing of the original, according to Benjamin, 'gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony" (79). It helps here if we think of Benjamin's later 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Mechanical Age of Reproduction," in which he further develops his arguments concerning reproduction of art and the loss of the original's aura. Benjamin claims that in precapitalist society, the artwork enjoyed a ritualistic status and his seminal concept of aura refers to an artwork's uniqueness and timelessness. In his examination of the relationship between aesthetics and social history, Benjamin argues that the artwork no longer enjoys a timeless quality — the artwork loses its aura through the advent of capitalist mass production. The artwork, according to Benjamin no longer absorbs the observer; the observer now absorbs the artwork, or to put in this relation in more material terms: the object no longer consumes the

observer, it is now consumed by the observer. The consumption of the past by the historian is precisely what Carlyle reacts against — such consumption or possession is antithetical to the ethical relation that should be nurtured with the past.

The translation of the past into the present is the essence of history, but before it can be ethically read and translated into the present, it must be othered.The beginning chapters of *Past and Present* are consciously aware of the past's palimpsestuous Otherness and of the need for translation. The book is described as "extremely foreign;" its language is "not only foreign but dead" (46). Yet its foreignness is not only due to its "Monk-Latin," but also to the very fact that the manuscript is seven hundred years old. The text itself is a "remote country" (45); it is "exotic, extraneous; in all ways coming from abroad" (46). Carlyle's editor juxtaposes the foreigness of the past and the death of the past, and he focuses on language, for it is utlimately through lannguage that we access the past. Like Benjamin's concept of translation which comes to us from the afterlife and the Levinisian face which speaks the immemorial past, we come face to face with the image of the past speaking to us from a remote foreign place, and, even more so, from the realm of death itself.

Carlyle's editor continues to emphasize the apparent unreadability of Jocelin's language, whose remoteness obscure the "the ideas, life furniture, whole workings and ways of this worthy Jocelin; covered deeper than Pompeii with lava ashes and inarticulate wreck of seven hundred years!" (46). Language is seen here as burning lava ashes that destroy meaning. The text disolves in inarticulation; it is a ruin from the past. However, all is not lost. Jocelin's manuscript, we are told, "failed not to be copied, to be multiplied, to be inserted in the Liber Albus" (46). The manuscript has survived "all accidents of malice and neglect for six centuries or so" and is now

safe in the Harleian Collection, neatly deciphered by Mr. Rokewood of the Camden Society (48). We are made to feel comfortable — the latest translation of the chronicle will answer all our questions about this particular moment in history, but is difficult to feel completely at ease after Carlyle's insistance of the obscurity of language and the subtle reference to the manuscript's copies.

Jocelin's text is the ultimate other: foreign, exotic, unreadable and untranslatable in in its original form. But the case for historical knowability is not upon first consideration lost. Urlich notes that John Elton's 1920 remark that Carlyle's *Past and Present* is "the most remarkable fruit in English literature of the medieval revival" (34) has been recycled in both Grace Calder's *The Writing of Past and Present* (1949) and Alice Chandler's *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (1971). For Urlich, however, Elton, Calder, and Chandler ultimately misread Carlyle's intentions. Urlich claims that Carlyle is not as interested in reviving the past as much as he is in reviving the present that is on the verge of complete dissolution: "the death against which Carlyle labors is the imminent death of the present, not the loss of an idealized past" (44). Carlyle clearly states this purpose in the following passage:

> It is this Editor's clear opinion, accordingly, that we must learn to do our Hero-worship better; that to do it better and better, means awakening of the Nation's soul from its asphyxia, and the return of blessed life to us, — Heaven's blessed life, not Mammon's galvonic accursed one. To resuscitate the Asphyxied, apparently now moribund, and in the last agony if not resuscitated: such and no other seems the consumation. (39)

The image of society as asphyxied, in deep need of resuscitation extends the dire opening pages of *Past and Present*, pages conscious of the present historical moment, in which the reader is forced to face the "condition of England" (10). Its condition is diseased; it is a "modern England, exuberant with supply of all kinds" but marred by the most excessive poverty (10). Keeping in mind the above passage when reading the opening paragraph to Book II, "The Ancient Monk", the section of *Past and Present* that is history proper, teaches us to how to read Carlyle's book. Carlyle's editor tells us that we will "strive to penetrate a little, by means of certain confused Papers, printed or other, into a remote Country; and look face to face on it, in hope of perhaps illustrating our own poor Century thereby" (45). In his earlier "Signs of the Times," Carlyle as social critic urged us to stop looking into the past — the past cannot properly teach us how to conduct ourselves in the present. Fifteen years later, Carlyle, forces us to face the past. However, his advice to look face-to-face on the past does not suggest that we will learn from errors we have made in the past and thereby correct our conduct within the present. The past will often appear unreadable. The hope Carlyle's historian lays on seeing into the past is that the past will hold itself up like a mirror to the present, and this certainly complicates the notion of the past itself and the Victorian idea of historial process signifying progress and social development.

The problem, however, is that Carlyle cannot hold the past up like a mirror because the very mirror is defective, its reflection disfigured. Jocelin's manuscript is nearly unreadable and what can be read does not always satisfy the reader. Jocelin, Carlyle's historian exclaims, "is but an altogether imperfect mirror of these old-world things!" (49). Not only does Jocelin's manuscript fail to offer a clear representation of the past, but he withholds infromation that a

reader would most likely want to know: "O Jocelin, what did he say, what did he do; how looked he, lived he; —at the very lowest, what coat or breeches had he on? Jocelin is obstinately silent. Jocelin marks down what interest *him*; entirely deaf to *us*" (50). This passage is a perfect example of Carlyle's awareness of temporal issues and difficulties in historical writing. Jocelin's frame of work is different from his later readers' — what interests Jocelin does not neccessarily interests *us*. Carlyle seems to imply that what should interest Jocelin, if Jocelin were an ethical historian is the "ideal" of the past — the ideal that binds both Jocelin and his descendent readers.

Carlyle's historian, exasperated with Jocelin's manuscript, proposes to visit St. Edmundsbury Monastery, even if "seven centuries off" (51). The primacy of the actual place, the actual ruins of St. Edmunsdbury is significant as Carlyle seems to imply that any knowledge of the past that is mediated through language remains flawed, an idea he has alluded to time and time again in his earlier historical narratives. We must immerse ourselves in the materiality of history — here our visit to the monastery — in order to draw out the immateriality of the past. Because the historical text does not offer what we need, Carlyle asks us to read the very ruins of the monastery because "Life lies buried there!" (54).

Reflecting on the ruins of St. Edmundsbury Abbey, the editor recognizes the ruins as a site of rupture that separates the past and present. The ruins are a material (re)presentation of the void between the past (when supposedly the abbey was in its full glory) and the present (the abbey in ruins). The abbey is "dead now, and dumb; but was alive once and spake" (54). The central question dwells on the problem of how to read the ruins: "the Past Time seems all one infinite incredible grey void" (42). The editor sternly objects to the "assiduous Pedantry" that accumulates "mountains of dead ashes, wreck and burnt bones" from the past and "name it

History," contemptuously envisioning the Titans writing over the pedant's "Historical Library" – "Dry rubbish shot here!" (53). He snubs the campaign to raise funds to preserve the ruined abbey, which at the time of Carlyle's writing was in danger of collapse. To Carlyle such a stand towards history – preservation –- has nothing to do with the true relation with the past. Preserving the past by monumentalizing it destroys its essence, its fluidity and movement.

It is earnest fact that the editor calls our attention to. The past is dim, it is unknowable and the true historian's purpose is to discern an "earnest fact" in the pages of the past. Ironically, earnest fact is to be found beyond materiality, beyond the letter. History is not about accumulating facts and data, certainly not about restoring ruins to their original state, as much as it is about earnestly discerning and interpreting meaning. As Chris Vanden Bossche notes, Carlyle's "frequent condemnations of the 'drysasdust" mentality that regards history as merely the facts of the past manifests his commitment to philosophical history that attempts to discover the meaning of the past" (xxi). To Carlyle's editor, the earnest fact of the abbey's walls is that they "were not peopled with fantasms; but with men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are" (54) — such recognition is more than stating the simple fact of the existence of the abbey and its monks; it requires of us a recognition that these monks were 'altogether as we are," organic filaments woven through time, requiring an ethical recognition of our common humanity. Carlyle tells us to "look with reverence into the dark, untenanted places of the Past, where in formless oblivion our chief benefactors lie entombed" (*OH* 6).

Jocelin's manuscript is nearly unreadable and what can be read does not always satisfy the reader. Jocelin "is but an altogether imperfect mirror of these old-world things!" (49). Yet he urges us to look through the imperfect mirror of the textual past:

> Readers who please to go along with us into this poor *Jocelini Chronica* shall wander inconveniently enough, as in wintry twilight, through some poor stript hazel-grove, rustling with foolish noise, and perpetually hindering the eye sight; but across which, here and there, some real human figure is seen moving: very strange; whom we could hail if he would answer; — and we look into a pair of eyes deep as our own, imagining our own, but all unconscious of us; to whom we for the time are become as spirits and invisible. (55)

Carlyle's editorializing overwrites Jocelin's chronicle. In marking out all that is wrong with Jocelin's translation of the past, Carlyle's editor enters into a face-to-face encounter with Jocelin's text and the past it seeks to represent, simultaneously figuring and disfiguring the past and teaching us along the way how to read the past ethically. In his "true fiction" Speech is the material representation of that which is silent, which is unrepresentable, of that which lies beyond the materiality of language.[18] The ethical relation takes place at the rupture between speech and silence.As in Benjamin's concept of translation which comes to us from the afterlife, as in the Levinisian face which speaks of an immemorial past that cannot be fully represented, as in the Kantian sublime, here in Carlyle, we paradoxically come face to face with the image of the past speaking to us from a remote foreign country, and, even more so, from the realm of death itself.

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[18] See Ralph's Jessop's *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* in which Jessop explains that for Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh's silence is "immaterial and therefore prior to speech which is 'of Time,' material, finite, mutable, and as with all worldly things in *Sartor,* of the Devil" (161).

Chapter II: Sir Walter Tailors the Past: The Palimpsestuous Historical Narrative

I have read Carlyle's ethical approach to history from the point of death. "Asking of the dead," positioning oneself face-to-face with the dead is Carlyle's returning topos. For Carlyle reading histories is one way to converse with the dead, foreshadowing Julian Wolfreys' poignant observation that the "dead continue to live on, to survive beyond life in the afterlife we call reading" (185), imposing on us an ethical responsibility to read histories, to read the dead. The humanism that I locate in Carlyle's historico-ethical ideology is not readily found in Walter Scott. In his 1838 essay "Sir Walter Scott," Carlyle sums up Scott: "there is nothing spiritual in him; all is economical, material, of the earth earthy" (35). Carlyle has it right to a certain point, but it is precisely the economy of Scott's language of picturesque descriptive minutia and the focus on the "thingness" of the historical moment by which Scott tailors Scottish communal memory.

In Thomas de Quincey's *Literary Reminiscences,* there is a striking image of Scott's face. De Quincey writes: "The face of Sir Walter Scott, as Irving, the pulpit orator, once remarked to me, was the indigenous face of the Border: the mouth, which was bad, and the entire lower part of the face, are seen repeated in thousands of working-men" (410). I am inclined to think Scott would have agreed with the description. After a career devoted to imagining the Border and the Highlands, Scott would probably have approved his face described as the face of the Scotland he loved, the indigenous Scotland. Irving's description wonderfully supports the select contemporary criticism that has laid the burden of inventing Scotland on Scott's shoulders — Sir Walter Scott *is* Scotland. Scott's face, the master signifier, is repeated in a multitude of other faces. Or is it the other way around? For this description raises another image to my mind: the

palimpsest. Scott's face resembles a palimpsest upon which the faces of "thousands of working-men" are inscribed, upon which the past of Scotland is inscribed. Following this thread, we can say that Scotland itself is a palimpsest. The union of 1707 overwrote its political, religious, and social culture, but Scotland was not completely undone, continuing to live in the memories of its people, and one person in particular: Scott, whose writing preserves Scotland's indigenous underwriting.

In the 2003 edition of the *Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment,* Murray Pittock calls Scott the "Enlightenment's greatest interpreter" (266). In *Bardic Nationalism,* Katie Trumpener argues that Scott's use of accentuating the Scottish identity only to dismiss it as anachronistic and safely fictitious is a nostalgic tribute to a loss that can be remembered in the space of a fictional narrative but that can no longer be sustained by the progressive overarching national identity of Britishness. Understood this way, Scott does not appear as an "interruption" but as a well established centrality. Scott emerges not solely as the originator of a romanticized Scottish national past, a safely fictional product, but as the ideological center of the newly forged British national identity. The privilege of progress over nostalgia appears to me slightly more complex in Scott. In the recent *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, Ian Duncan, Leith Davis, and Janet Sorensen argue that Scott is equally more than an "ideological dead center and more than a nostalgic subverser"(13). His texts inscribe the geographical border between Scotland and England and the philosophical border between the Scottish Enlightenment and Romanticism, ultimately collapsing the border between history and fiction. History does not discipline Scott's fiction. His fiction counters history, destablizes the present as it unleashes the

past. What happens in the space of Scott's historical romance is a productive violence of genre form and nationalist discourse. Not so safe, after all.

Traditional scholarship, influenced in great part by Georg Lukács' Marxist work *The Historical Novel,* argues that Scott participates in Enlightenment historiography, tracking a linear historical process, wherein the relationship between the past and present is diachronic and monological. I will take a cue from the pre-Marxist Lukács's *The Theory of the Novel* and more recent scholarship in order to argue that Scott's narratives are preoccupied with a relation between the past and present which is synchronic and dialectic. The memories around which Scott builds his fictional historical worlds carry into the present a past which essentially interrupts the stable, ordered present. In Scott's texts, memories vex the present. Memories are agents of interruption, a destabilizing force that translates the past into the present. The past Scott predominately faces is the memory of dead historical moments, eras long passed and gone, on the point of being pasts that have not persisted in the present. The most obvious and pressing question is why should a particular historical moment be remembered or unveiled? Why not hand it over to oblivion? Scott's narratives always come back to this question, and never offer a straightforward answer. In not offering an answer, Scott, paradoxically, asserts that there is a universal need to remember, to take account of one's past (individual or collective). The Jacobite afterlife that leaves a trace in the present, haunting Scott's *Waverley* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1818), and *Redgauntlet* (1824), is at once in excess of history, or to borrow Cairns Craig's formulation, "outside of history" — a disturbing memory that seeks to resist historical progress — *and* it is within history, contained by the text. Scott's use of prefaces, footnotes and editorial commentaries and not least his careful tailoring of competing historiographical ideologies

demonstrate a paradoxical impulse. They counter the stability of the textualized memory or history and the stability of the genre, always emphasizing the narrative's ability to create and sustain, as well as undo historical memory.

Of Scott's novels which operate on the level of the palimpsest (both formally and contextually), I turn to *Redgauntlet* as the clearest example of a palimpsest. *Redgauntlet,* a fictitious historical narrative in every proper sense of the term, imagines a third Jacobite rising, headed yet again by the Pretender, Charles Edward. This imaginative account not only overwrites the Jacobite novels that precede it, *Waverley* and *Rob Roy,* each dealing with its own historical Jacobite rising of 1745 and 1715 respectively, but also reflects on the narrative structure that represents and recreates the earlier histories. However, *Redgauntlet* fails in realizing the complete fiction: the third Jacobite rising of Scott's imagination fails. Fiction fails in the face of history — but why? Is this a way for Scott to warn against memories that remain alive within historical conditions that cannot sustain them? If so, the text contradicts itself because in the very act of reading *Redgauntlet,* Scott opens the past to the present, situating the past as the site of loss and mourning, and for a moment allows the possibility of a different history. Even more significantly, in Scott there emerges a sense that history is not simply something that acts on the individual; rather while the individual is in history he or she simultaneously stands outside history by reflecting on it.

In addition, what makes Scott a fascinating object for palimpsestuous readings is the varied criticisms surrounding his work which aggressively seek to constantly overwrite each

other.[19] From the moment Lukács labeled Scott as the father of the historical novel, Scott has been seen as a novelist distinctly aware of the material conditions that surround subjects of history. On one end, Scott is put in the service of the Enlightenment, a writer who overturns the aristocratic, feudal order in the name of middle-class values and universal progress. On the other end, Scott has been understood as a Romantic nationalist whose texts endorse the current politics of national self-determination. But the factions of the Enlightenment and Romanticism serendipitously overlap in more recent criticism, offering a criticism that emphasizes ambiguity in Scott's historiography and accentuating the intellectual and cultural surroundings Scott worked in. This criticism consistently teases Scott's dualistic or, more to my point, palimpsestuous historiographic frame.

In the most recent comprehensive study of Scott's opus and influence on the development of the Scottish Romantic novel in the nineteenth-century, *Scott's Shadow* (2007), Ian Duncan asserts that "the claim of fiction as the medium of reality" was developed in Scottish Enlightenment empiricism (xii). According to Duncan, Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* provided the theoretical foundation which finds "its technical realization in the Waverley Novels" (xii). Duncan connects Hume's fiction making as the strand that holds society together to what Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, in *Practicing New Historicism*, assign to the novel — " a fundamental practice of modern ideology — acquiescence without belief, crediting

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[19] As the title of the fourth international Scott conference, *Scott's Carnival*, held in Edinburg in 1991, attests to, criticism of Scott indeed has something of the carnival to it, the Bahktinian carnival of competing discourses, the carnival that is the novel which pushes boundaries of form and content. The conference gathered scholars such as Ina Ferris, Ian Duncan, and Murray Pittock, to name a few, and the criticism and response to Scott's work was as varied as Scott's own historical romance genre. In the introduction to *Waverley*, Scott attempts to explain the work he has written: the process of choosing the title, the hero's name. He calls his work a "historical romance" and is at pains to explain the genre, which he does through negation by clearly explaining what his historical romance *is not*; he himself does not quite know which carnivalesque beast he has unleashed.

without credulousness" (169). Gallagher and Greenblatt proceed to argue that it is impossible for literary theory and critical analysis to ascertain whether the novel “compensate[s] for the experience of social powerlessness, or, instead, inspire[s] resistance” (170). Perhaps this statement is no where more true than when considering the diverse criticism (in particular the distinct factions adopting Scott as an advocate of the 1707 Act of Union on the one hand, and as an apologetic voice for the Jacobite cause on the other) that surrounds Scott’s work.

I argue that Scott’s narratives enact a conversation between Enlightenment and Romantic historiographies, which fulfill and undo their own ideological functions. *Waverley, Rob Roy,* and *Redgauntlet* endorse Enlightenment historiography and the 1707 Act of Union, rehearsing a rhetoric of nation building and tailoring a pattern of a British national identity. At the same time, these romances turn to the past with nostalgia, mourning a loss of a particular Scottish cultural and political identity. The very entrance of the past, which was supposed to underwrite an endorsement of the 1707 union narrative, anxiously undoes the rhetoric of Enlightenment historiography. In Scott’s historical narratives, the memory of the past is a double-edged sword: on one side it preserves a moment, offers a point of origin and stability; on the other side, the memory of the past poses an obstacle to the present’s unfolding in the very preservation of itself. As such Scott’s historical romances are palimpsestuous texts that constantly pit competing histories against each other, overwriting narratives and historical memories. While criticism has noted the dualistic nature of Scott’s historiography, it nevertheless attempted to apply a coherent system to Scott’s historiography generally at the expense of either the Enlightened or Romantic Scott. In addition, criticism has never applied the idea of the palimpsest to Scott’s texts or a palimpsestuous reading of Scott, which can help us further illuminate the dualistic nature of his

work and comfort us in the face of the competing histories that oppose and support one another in his texts.

1. Material Pasts: Scott's Antiquarianism and the Palimpsest of Memory

In "The Palimpsest of the Human Brain"(1845), first published in *Blackwood's Magazine,* de Quincey explores the image of the palimpsest, which as Josephine McDonagh demonstrates is a significant image for nineteenth-century thought.[20] For de Quincey, the fascination with the structure of the palimpsest derives from its relation to how the mind functions in storing memories and recollecting. According to McDonagh, de Quincey's palimpsest not only extends ideas raised by writers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge but also stands in the tradition of psychological models. "The Empiricist's *tabula rasa* and Freud's Mystic Writing-Pad," explains McDonagh, "are models of the mind that flank the palimpsest" (209). Like the palimpsest the *tabula rasa* and the Mystic Writing-Pad are surfaces upon which writing is inscribed, but while the t*abula rasa* constantly erases previous writing, the palimpsest and the Mystic Writing-Pad offer a space for retention, becoming depositories of past and current inscriptions (209). However, unlike the Writing-Pad which impedes recollection even if the traces of the past are preserved, the palimpsest can bring about recollection (209). The image of the palimpsest in historical discourse raises a set of problems. For Carlyle, the wonder that is history is precisely contained within this image: an ever unfolding historical process, both synchronous and dialectic, where if we are earnest and honest readers of the past we can trace the

[20] McDonagh's 1987 article, "Writings on the Mind: Thomas de Quincey and the Importance of the Palimpsest in Nineteenth-century Thought" sets useful ground for investigating the use and purpose of the palimpsest in writers such as de Quincey and G.H, Lewes. To my knowledge, this essay is the only critical analysis up to date that looks at nineteenth-century texts and the image of the palimpsest.

past for itself, marking its writing underneath the score of empirical data. Applied to Scott, the palimpsest image complicates Scott's historical project and his place in literary history. Scott the empiricist overwrites the past, leads the past into a more civilized future, but Scott the romanticist constantly unveils the *scriptio inferior*, the underwriting of the historical palimpsest. Since Scott's novels always push to the surface the role of memory, we should consider the role of memory in palimpsestuous historical discourse.

In *Memory, History, Forgetting* Paul Ricoeur posits that we "have no other resource, concerning our reference to the past, except memory itself" (21). Not only is memory the gateway to the past, but also memory is tied to "an ambition, a claim — that of being faithful to the past" (21). According to Ricoeur, memory signifies "something has taken place, has occurred, has happened *before* we declare that we remember it" (21 Ricoeur's italics). Memory as such presupposes referentiality, a verifiable, substantive event. Ricoeur then throws into the mix "declaration" or testimony, positing that testimony "constitutes the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history" (21). Thus, in Scott those who testify are the bardic characters such as Flora, or his beggars and otherwise marginal figures (*The Antiquary's* Edie Ochiltree and Elspeth, *The Heart of Midlothian's* Madge Wildfire, to name a few), who propagate communal memory through oral literature and remembrance, push the past into the present, and make living historical moments out of memories. Because testimony plays the role of conduit between memory and history, we must always consider who is testifying and who is recording the testimonies. And as if this did not complicate matters enough in relation to memory's claim to faithfulness to the past, we also need to consider the translation of memory to history in terms of a translation of something that is at first beyond language to something that is

sayable — the translation of memory to a linguistic plane, its moment of declaration. When either personal or collective memory is narrativized and translated into the linguistic sphere of the text, it pulls along ethical concerns. Memories that remain unspoken or those that are dispersed through oral literature, being carried through generations, transfigure and morph, bearing the mark of fluidity and flexibility to adjust to whatever is the current, particular individual or communal need. Textual memories — those that are recorded and inscribed in a text — are commodified, labeled, and made permanent. As such, textual memories have the aura of truth and objectivity.

Ricoeur reminds us that the Greeks distinguished between *mnēmē*, memory, and *anamnēsis*, recollection. According to Ricoeur's explanation of Aristotle's distinction, memory "arises in the manner of an affectation, while recollection consists in an active search" (17). The distinction between *mnēmē* and *anamnēsis* is significant, as within the distinction lie two central concerns of history: how events are remembered and to what purpose memories are put. Understood this way, memory is passive and recollection is active. Recollection appears fragmented, wanting wholeness, and is in danger of being stigmatized as reconstructed, appearing more artificial, crafted and made, than the spontaneous and passive-like *mnēnē*. Recollection then appears to be a creative and recreative aesthetic, a *techne* in the Greek sense, and its status as such is fallible as it is opposed to empiricist episteme.

2. "Correct and Verify:" Antiquarian, Revised, and Corrected History

The relation between memory and recollection appears in many Waverley novels, and nowhere more clearly than in the *Tale of Old Mortality* (1816). What Scott has to say about

memory in the first pages of his novel reflects the classical notions of *mnēmē* and *anamnēsis* and Ricoeur's more recent theories on the nature of memory and historical discourse. As such, Scott's own historiography lies between the ancient and postmodern. Peter Pattieson, the narrator / editor of *Old Mortality*, describes his frequent walk to a near-by burial ground, where the monuments are "half-sunk in the ground and overgrown with moss" (6). Pattieson imagines that to the antiquary the most interesting monument would be the one that "bears the effigies of a doughty knight," whose "armorial bearings are defaced by time, and a few worn-out letters may be read at the pleasure of the decypherer, *Dns, Johan de Hamel, or Johan de Lamel*" (7). The tombs are decaying due to the passing of time, but it is precisely material decay that enables a distancing, which in turn lends a solemn feeling to the burial ground "without exciting those of a more unpleasing description" (6). Patttieson recognizes death; he asserts that "death has indeed been here, and its traces are before us; but they are so softened and deprived of their horror by our distance from the period when they have been first impressed" (7). Here, there is a subtle allusion to memory and how events are impressed on our minds, becoming memories that are vulnerable when faced with the passing of time. In the case of death, the faded impression of the event is understood as benevolent decay. The progress of time obscures and romanticizes death. However, while the horrors of death are softened by the decay of the tombs, Pattieson explains that the "memory of some of those who sleep beneath them is still held in reverend remembrance" (7). As long as there is someone to sustain the memory, the material decay of the tombs cannot prevent the past's intrusion into the present nor can it allow a complete romantic totalization of the past.

Very quickly, however, the narrator draws our attention from the tombs that attract the antiquarian to "two other stones which lie beside," upon whose surface "may still be read in rude prose, and ruder rhyme, the history of those who lie beneath them. They belong, we are assured by the epitaph, to the class of persecuted Presbyterians who afforded a melancholy subject for history in the time of Charles II. and his successor" (7). Unlike the tombs that attract the antiquarian, the tombs that have decayed to the point of obscurity, enabling a safe distance at which to contemplate a past, these tombs tell "the history of those who lie beneath them" (7). By juxtaposing these tombs with the older and heavily defaced tombs of a Merry England, Pattieson juxtaposes two layers of the past: a more distant and obscure past that can be mastered by the present and a more recent past that resists the present. Because the past can still be read upon the surface of these tombs, its presence is not yet overwritten by the present.

The past speaks for itself and cannot be readily idealized and contained by the present. Moreover, the past that these tombs encrypt is uncomfortable and resists idealization and totalization. In the same manner as its explosive occurrence in the historical process, this past remains an interruption in the plane of historical memory, leaving a trace on the present. This speaks to Walter Benjamin's assertion that history cannot be structured on a site of "homogenous, empty time" (*Theses* 261). The proper historian, who for Benjamin is the historical materialist, needs to "blast open the continuum of history" (262) and "brush history against the grain" (257). Latching onto these moments of interruption, unveiling traces in the historical process that are not homogenous is the proper object of historical investigation.

Peter Burke beautifully explains the task of the historian:

> Herodotus thought of historians as the guardians of memory, the memory of glorious deeds. I prefer to see historians as the guardians of awkward facts, the skeletons in the cupboard of the social memory. There used to be an official called the 'Remembrancer". The title was actually a euphemism for debt-collector; the official's job was to remind people of what they would have liked to forget. One of the most important functions of the historian is to be a remembrancer. (110)

I want us to think about Scott as a remembrancer. The stones that entomb the Covenanters offer a different past, "a melancholy subject for history," a past ridden by civil strife as the Covenanting army rebelled against the Royalists, a rebellion that culminated in the reactionary assassination of Archbishop Sharp in 1679. Scott "blast[s] open the continuum of history," latching onto the event of 1679 as his starting point. In doing so, Scott narrates, through the words of Pattieson, a historical moment "without depreciating the memory" of the Covenanters or that of the Royalists (8). Scott's history then becomes a Benjaminian history of the oppressed, a history against the grain of Herodotus' tradition, showing how both parties are oppressed by a historical moment whose consequences and necessities are beyond the immediate comprehension of the parties involved.

On a visit to the "deserted mansion of the dead" (8), Pattieson meets Old Mortality, a man "busily employed in deepening, with his chisel, the letters of the inscription, which, announcing, in scriptural language, the promised blessings of futurity to be the lot of the slain, anathematized the murderers with corresponding violence" (8). Scott alludes here to the power of language to simultaneously bless and anathematize, and by Old Mortality chiseling and reinscribing the inscription, he once again blesses the victims and curses their murderers. The action of the chisel,

itself violent, is juxtaposed with the "corresponding violence" of the inscription's curse. The past here reenters the present through language. The writing on the tombstone figures as a material trace of an event that cannot be referenced anymore: events happen at one point in time and cannot be repeated. "The event," Ricoeur writes, "is simply what happens. It takes place. It passes and occurs. It happens, it comes about" (*MHF* 23). But the memory of the event can be contained within some material, in this case the inscriptions on the tombs, which point to a trace of time, to something beyond the mere material sign. In "The Trace of the Other," Levinas describes the trace as the "insertion of space in time, the point at which the world inclines toward a past and a time" (358). The inscription on the tomb embodies a past space and time, it inserts a past into the present as we read the writing on the tomb, and inclines us towards remembering the past. But the redundancy of Old Mortality's name, the redundancy of the reinscription and the repeated action of the chisel, forces upon us the question of the past's own redundancy. Viewed this way, the past may be seen as an excess that is not needed by the present unless it is a disruptive force.

Pattieson learns from Old Mortality that he has once been a farmer but left his home to wander and conduct a long pilgrimage of refurbishing the decaying tombs of Covenanters: "in the most lonely recesses of the mountains, the moor-fowl shooter has been often surprised to find him busied in cleansing the moss from the grey stones, renewing with his chisel the half-defaced inscriptions, and repairing the emblems of death" (9-10). Old Mortality revitalizes the memory of the deceased, the memory that the inscriptions materialize through language. He renews and repairs the traces of the past. In addition, Old Mortality "considered himself as fulfilling a sacred duty, while renewing to the eyes of posterity the decaying emblems of the zeal and sufferings of

their forefathers" (10). Old Mortality participates in a type of performative memory: through this act he keeps the past traceable, "renewing" the past "to the eyes of posterity," by visiting the decaying tombs and reinscribing the half-effaced emblems. The "eyes of posterity" is an image of the posterity as audience, gazing at memory's performance of conjuring the past before them. The inscriptions have to be reinscribed and made new again, so that they can be read and in reading relived and experienced by later generations. Here the repairs conducted on the tombs differ remarkably from the repairs conducted on Bardwardine's estate in *Waverley.* Old Mortality repairs to preserve and recall the past back into the present, prolonging the memory of those who are no longer there to share first hand accounts of past events. By contrast, repairs of the estate seek to efface any marker of the past, to push the past in the realm of forgetting. Old Mortality's monuments function as a type of palimpsest, although the overwriting seeks to match the *scriptio inferior* — the original inscriptions are reinscribed. In such reinsription lies a fundamental belief in origin.

This element of reliving the past is present in the way Old Mortality speaks of past events: "he was profuse in the communication of all the minute information which he had collected concerning them, their wars, their woes, and their wanderings. One would almost have supposed he must have been their contemporary, and have actually beheld the passages which he related" (11). When Old Mortality speaks of the past, the distance between the present and the past is annihilated, but even more significantly, Old Mortality participates in collective memory — he negotiates memories, which he cannot directly remember. Pattieson distrusts this full immersion into the past and emphasizes that he has "endeavoured to correct and verify" Old Mortality's anecdotes "from the most authentic sources of tradition, afforded by the

representatives of either party" (13). In this manner, Pattieson resembles the antiquary who travels around the cultural landscape, collecting fragments of the past.

In "Antiquarianism and the Scottish Science of Man," Susan Manning connects the "ambivalent standing" of the antiquarian in Scotland to post union cultural politics (59). The fundamental problem the Enlightenment historiographer had with the antiquarian is the latter's "resistance to the grand narratives of philosophic history" (60). Manning points out that antiquaries "in the common eighteenth-century view [. . .] catalogued and accumulated objects, delighting in singularity. Their relationship to the matter of their inquiries was subjective, affective, and — crucially — unconceptualized" (58). As Manning continues to explain: "antiquarian procedures facilitated a rather suspect form of engagement with history, recently described as 'affecting,' in which the recovery of family 'relics,' local landmarks, and memorabilia evoked a sentimental and proprietorial response, often of a very personal nature" (63).[21] The affective and subjective responses to objects from the past, the fetishistic response to the past, opposed the stern-like, objective reading of the past as practiced by the Enlightenment historian. The interesting paradox is that the antiquarian who "affected" the past was genuinely interested in uncovering essences and truth. However, because of the preoccupation with material objects as the source to unlocking the past, the truth is nearly unattainable due both to the antiquarian's inability or resistance to look beyond the material remnants *and* to the partialness of the stories the inherited material tells. This preoccupation with the particulars and the distrust of imagination to fill in the gaps between the material remnants of the past collided with the principles of historiographers such as Hume, who attempted to link

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[21] The argument that the antiquarian project as "affectionating" the past is fully explored in Jayne Elizabeth Lewis' *Mary Queen of Scots: Romance and Nation.*

material extension to perception, the thing to thought: "In Humean terms, antiquaries failed to register the power of memory and imagination in creating a continuous picture of reality" (Manning 63). The Enlightenment places memory and imagination in the service of constructing a continuous world-view and a historical network of clearly set causes and effects. As such, the Humean imagination has a very distinct ideological purpose. As Duncan explains: "Humean scepticism posits [a] continuous, habitual world of ordinary relations as fiction" ("Hume, Scott" 67). In the *Treatise,* Hume claims that "the memory, senses, and understanding" are all "founded on the imagination" (313). Duncan further notes that in Hume's philosophy the imagination is the faculty that provides the conditions for understanding, ultimately structuring an "empirical reality" and "necessary illusions of spatial and temporal continuity, and — by extension — subjective as well as objective identity in space and time" (67).

However, this "speculative philosophy" that Hume starts and that is carried through the work of *The Edinburgh Review* resonated with John Gibson Lockhart, Scott's son-in-law and biographer, as an "inauthentic version of national culture" (Duncan, *Scott's Shadow* 48). As an answer to what he saw as a failure in Scottish Enlightenment, Lockhart advocated a "nationalist ideal of a mystic secular totality, combining past, present, and future generations" and relying "on a polemical repudiation of the Whig tradition that empirically constituted much of modern Scottish cultural identity" (Duncan 48). For Lockhart, the key to this type of nation formation was Scott, whom he "represented as the incarnation of national tradition: a synthesis of antiquary and bard, impressario and necromancer" (Duncan 49). Lockhart's idea of Scott is tempting. To view Scott as a collector of tales about the past, as the voice of the dead, who raises the dead and

gives back life to the past is appealing. However, that is only one side of Scott's face that enables Lockhart to support the ideology of a romantic nationalism, which is certainly more attractive, as its fictional basis is covered by the cloth of communal memory, than the type of nation or society that is built upon a Humean fiction. As Duncan argues, as much as this bardic Scott may be true, Lockhart's "version of Scott is a misconstruction," and one of such proportions that it has affected Scott's reputation and has severed Scott from his connections with the Scottish Enlightenment (49). Duncan argues that Scott's role in nation construction "emerges through a systematic clouding of the distinction between antiquarian discovery and scientific historicism, on the one hand, and invention, *poesis*, fiction making, on the other" (49). The antagonism between an empiricist historiography and antiquarian procedures is reflected in Scott's narratives. Scott was consistently ambiguous in his relation to antiquarian practices. In his own life, Scott was an avid antiquarian and collector. His home, Abbotsford, stands as a monument to the antiquarian project that sought to collect and possess objects of the past; however, the figure of the antiquarian is gently ridiculed, most prominently in his novel *The Antiquary,* but also through his most famous editor and collector of things from the past, Dryasdust, whose very name signifies the type of histories Scott hopes not to write.

In *The Antiquary,* we are introduced to the lovable Jonathan Oldbuck, who "measured decayed entrenchments, made plans of ruined castles, read illegible inscriptions, and wrote essays on medals in the proportion of twelve pages to each letter of the legend" (25). Scott's description of Oldbuck's study serves as a wonderful example of antiquarianism and of a space where past and present meet. The description is at once sympathetic and critical of the collector's zeal and love of the objects from times past:

> It was a lofty room of middling size, obscurely occupied by book-shelves, greatly too limited in space for the number of volumes place upon them, which were, therefore, drawn up in ranks of two or three files deep, while numberless others littered the floor and tables, amid chaos of maps, engravings, scraps of parchment, bundles of papers, pieces of old armour, swords, dirks, helmets, and Highland targets [. . .] The top of the cabinet was covered with busts, and Roman lamps and paterae, intermingled with one or two bronze figures. The walls of the apartment were partly clothed with grim old tapestry [. . .] The rest of the room was panelled, or wainscotted, with black oak, against which hung two or three portraits in armour, being characters in Scottish history, favourites of Mr Oldbuck [. . .] A large old-fashioned oak table was covered with a profusion of papers, parchments, books, and nondescript trinkets and gewgaws, which seemed to have little to recommend them, besides rust and the antiquity which it indicates. (32-33)

Various pasts collide in Oldbuck's study: objects dating back to the Roman invasion of the British isles stand in proximity to "Highland targets," the Anglo-Saxon tapestry along with portraits depicting "characters from Scottish history" overlook the general "wreck of ancient books and utensils" (33). Upon entering Oldbuck's study, time in its very presence (the materiality of the diverse objects) is paradoxically annihilated by the juxtaposition of objects signifying diverse temporalities. "It was," the narrator explains "indeed, some time before Lovel could, through the thick atmosphere, perceive in what sort of den his friend had constructed his retreat" (32). The objects spread about without any order in Oldbuck's study overwhelm Lovel.

But Scott does not offer us a sense that it is the past embedded in the objects which creates the "thick atmosphere." Walking into Oldbuck's den does not invoke a sublime experience of Carlylean proportions; it is not a rupturing of the self before a primeval philosophical understanding. Scott depicts clutter, masses of disparate things that collect dust, take up space, and, more often than not, mislead. And so, the "thick atmosphere" and Lovel's inability to immediately perceive what is before him is not of the same nature as when Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh, bewildered and perplexed, stands in awe before "celestial hieroglyphs" (*SR* 195). When faced with the utmost sublimity of the past, Teufelsdröckh attains a degree of philosophical understanding. Oldbuck's den is a material representation of the past — its surface and nothing more. Because Scott emphasizes the past's materiality as something that is disordered, good for nothing but attracting dust, the past becomes a waste in the present, a hindrance, a "thick atmosphere" that hinders us from seeing what is before us, what is now.

Oldbuck prides himself on knowing the past, but the objects in his den represent fragments of the past, and cannot provide a coherent fashioning of their time and place of origin. Later in the story, Scott has Oldbuck "rummaging among a quantity of miscellaneous papers, ancient and modern," but "the abundance of his collection often prevented him from finding the article he sought for" (107). The abundance of historical knowledge or information can prevent us from seeing into the essence of the past, that is, from noting what is actually important. Oldbuck is also often wrong in his historical conjectures, and Scott explicitly connects his errors to antiquarian sensibility: "For this good old gentleman had, from his antiquarian researches, acquired a delight in building theories out of premises which were often far from affording sufficient ground for them" (133) and Edie is even more to the point: "Monkbarns is no that ower

wise himsell, in some things — he wad believe a bodle to be auld Roman coin, as he ca's it, or a ditch to be a camp" (213).

Unlike the antiquary, however, Pattieson wants to make the fragments whole and, moreover, wants the various fragments to "correct and verify" each other. The authentic sources of tradition are moorland farmers and travelling-merchants, weavers and tailors, the latter which he holds in the highest regard due to their job's necessity of moving around the country and therefore "possessing a complete register of rural traditions" (13). The juxtaposition between farmers and merchants and weavers and tailors requires a closer look. On one end, Scott has farmers as an authentic source of history. The image of the farmer who cultivates land and then waits for the organic growth of that which he has sown corresponds to the historian who observes history from the sidelines, tracking its organic process. The merchant as historian takes on a different hue — he buys and sells, exchanges stories of the past. In either case we deal with an image of a historian who transacts with a more or less unadulterated past. In contrast, the image of weavers and tailors inherently contain images of artistry, artificiality, creation. Weavers and tailors as historians *make* history. The fact that Pattieson's story will conclude outside of the history he relates, in the room of a mantua-maker, who demands to know what happened to the characters in the story after their respective histories were so meticulously documented, points heavily to the idea that historical memory is made and constructed. The question of who is making a particular historical memory also arises. Pattieson claims to have spoken with all of these witnesses, collecting their stories, weaving a more coherent and objective picture of the past. Pattieson can do with the cloth of history what later Carlyle's editor in *Sartor Resartus* will gravely fail at precisely because tailoring exposes the materiality of actual history that seeks to

deny the essence to the past.[22] Pattieson takes on the role of the master tailor, tailoring Old Mortality's stories, correcting and verifying the seams in the cloth of the past. Pattieson's sources are people and their stories, and he promises that he will tell us a history that will do "justice to the merits of both parties." As someone who stands outside the historical moment he narrates, Pattieson cannot escape the problem of perspective as much as he wants us to believe that he will offer an objective account. More significantly, he is not slow to point out that his religious sympathies do not align with Old Mortality's and the Covenanters, "whose intolerance and narrow-minded bigotry are at least as conspicuous as their devotional zeal" (7-8). Although Pattieson modifies this statement by asserting that he does not want to depreciate the memory of either party, this qualification is in no degree impartial and complicates Pattieson's decision to overwrite Old Mortality's stories, i.e. he is reflecting as well as telling.

Sentiments such as these partially sparked the controversy over the novel, shortly after its publication, and the past inscribed in the novel invades the present beyond the text. In *The Achievement of Authority,* Ina Ferris presents the argument posited by Scott's contemporary, the Reverend Thomas McCrie, a dissenting Presbyterian and clergyman. McCrie was offended by Scott's approach to the subject of the Covenanters, which McCrie held "sacred" (141). In the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor,* McCrie attacked Scott and *Old Mortality* because it used fiction to substitute for history, that is, McCrie felt readers will accept Scott's fictional account as

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[22] I borrow the phrase "materiality of actual history" from Paul de Man. While it is difficult to fully explain in the space of a footnote just what de Man means by this concept as it would require us to examine his broader theory of materiality that underlies much of his texts, and while for de Man it is fundamentally a rhetorical argument, it points to the dualistic nature of history — there is history outside of language and history within language. While history is material in the sense that historical events happen, they are concrete, history is also material in de Man's, where materiality is not phenomenal, which for most of us appears counterintuitive. Understood this way, history is not open to the senses, and for de Man, history is then ultimately caused by language. In "Anthropomorphism and Trope in Lyric," de Man argues that terms such as "'romanticism' or classicism' are always terms of resistance and nostalgia, at the furthest remove from the materiality of actual history" (262). Resistance and nostalgia then never represent the "actual history" or the history or the past existing in fact, in the real, as opposed to a history situated in the ideal.

historical truth.[23] However, according to Ferris, the debate over *Old Mortality* did not take on the question of fiction versus history as it proposed; rather the debate "enact[ed] a political and ideological struggle over control of the past and therefore over the shape of the present and future" (143). Or to translate this to what concerns us, what the debate exposed was the idea that memories belong to certain groups (religious, political, national), and one must have the right to remember and to control a memory. Scott, a Tory, in the eyes of the inheritors of the Covenant did not have such a right, and on the level of *Old Mortality's* narrative, Pattieson, who has openly declared himself in opposition to the Covenanter ideology, certainly must have offended McCrie.

Scott must have been aware of the potential ethical and ideological problem of a Tory's retelling a tale that belongs to the Covenanter community. Perhaps this is why *Old Mortality,* a novel which draws attention to its multivoiced layers, has the most invisible Scott narrator. Scott creates a palimpsest of various memories. He relinquishes control: Pattieson, his own manuscript edited by Cleishbotham, overwrites Old Mortality's story with recollected fragments of others, but the origin, the cryptic voices are never silenced. McCrie would have not have heard the voices, and the latter point does demand some faith from the reader: there is a referential event beyond Scott's narrative that escapes Scott. Aside from the beginning, where Pattieson sets the ground for the narrative and a few footnotes inserted by Cleishbotham, the editors are reduced to silence. Pattieson never alludes to which part of the story is Old Mortality's, which is not, how it might have been "corrected and verified." In addition, *Old Mortality* is notorious for factual errors and excessive anachronism. No doubt, Scott purposely manipulates historical facts to bring attention to the work's fictionality as well as to the weakness of memory, the unavoidable

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[23] The attack was defended in the *Edinburgh Review* by Francis Jeffrey, and Scott himself responded to McCrie in the *Quarterly Review* (Ferris 141).

errors that happen when collecting recollections or translating memory into a linguistic plane. Scott points to the inherent necessity in tailoring the past, in the fact that history does not originate; it is made.

At the end of the narrative, Pattieson will reappear to write a meta-narrative, that is, a concluding chapter that is not a conclusion, defying reader expectations: "I had determined," Pattieson writes, "to waive the task of a concluding chapter, leaving to the reader's imagination the arrangements which must necessarily take place after Lord Evandale's death" (349). The readers must pause at this curious statement that asks them to imagine the end. This call to imagine stands in stark contrast to Pattieson's initial intention to overwrite Old Mortality's tale by correcting and verifying details. In the conclusion that is not a conclusion, Pattieson tells us that he was invited by Miss Martha Buskbody, "a young lady who has carried on the profession of mantua-making at Grandercleugh, and in the neighbourhood, with great success, for about forty-years" (349). Miss Buskbody, although highly complimentary of Pattieson's work, has one criticism: the "plan of omitting a formal conclusion will never do" (350). It is no accident that Miss Buskbody is in the business of mantua-making, a tailor in her own right, and quite successful at that. Miss Buskbody needs the conclusion, needs the past to have its seams in place, no loose strings allowed — tailored to perfection. However, the seams that Buskbody wants tightened are of "matrimonial comforts" (350) and restoration of property and order.

In contrast to her readerly expectations, Pattieson's narrative ends in not ending with a harrowing vision of John Balfour and one of the Dutchman dragoons: "Their corpses were taken out about a quarter of a mile down the river. As Balfour's grasp could not have been unclenched without cutting off his hands, both were thrown into a hasty grave, still marked by a rude stone,

and a ruder epitaph" (349). Scott comes full circle with invoking the rude stones from the beginning of the narrative and pointing out one where both a Covenanter and Royalist are buried together, forever clasped in opposition. This is not a comfortable image — the past is not put to rest in the aggressive death met by both Balfour and the Dutch soldier, and Scott overwrites it with the interchange between Pattieson and Miss Buskbody. Yet Scott is aware of the artificiality of an ending that seeks to restore order where there is still unresolved tension, that seeks to bury a past that continues to persist in Old Mortality's tales and his dutiful chiseling. The self-reflexive and hyper-conscious conclusion that is not a conclusion continues to disturb. While Pattieson appeases Miss Buskbody's curiosity to a certain point, telling her that Morton and Miss Bellenden did get married (Miss Buskbody insists the writer must be "particular concerning their matrimonial comforts [350]), that John Gudyill "reinstated his dignity" and that Lady Margaret got her fortune back (350), he somewhat abruptly leaves her (and the readers) "ere the Demon of Criticism had supplied her with any more queries" (352). Through this play with narratorial control and form, Scott pushes to the foreground the important question surrounding the writing of history — who is writing? In other words, who is exercising memory?

3. The Tailoring of *Rob Roy*

Scott's histories are usually written by editors who stand on the boundaries of the historical moment they narrate and who cannot directly and independently participate in recollection. These editors live in the afterlife of the historical moment they translate into the text; they are collectors of fragments of the past and creators of textual memory. The most vivid example of a novel by Scott that appears to deviate from this rule is *Rob Roy*. Yet it is

nonetheless a palimpsestuous text at work. A memoir-like recollection of a personal history intersected with the Jacobite rising of 1715, *Rob Roy* is written in first person by Francis Osbaldistone and addressed to Will Tresham. Osbaldistone desires that his memoir be read after his death. The memoir allows Osbaldistone to speak beyond the grave, so that Tresham, and we as readers, face the dead in the proximity that direct memory extends. Earlier, Osbaldistone claims that a tale committed to paper "loses half its charms" (5), and no doubt the editor that makes himself present calls back the reality of the relation between memory and language. For *Rob Roy* is edited by someone who is twice removed from the time the memoir is written, editing in 1818 a text written in 1745 about a rebellion in 1715. He is not shy about "correcting" Osbaldistone's memory. When Inverashalloch proudly states that he has "come here wi' my men to fight against the red MacGregor that killed my cousin seven times removed, Duncan MacLaren in Invernenty," the editor inserts a footnote correcting the detail: "This, as appears from the introductory matter to this Tale, is an anachronism. The slaughter of MacLaren, a retainer of the chief of Appine, by the MacGregors, did not take place till after Rob Roy's death, since it happened in 1736" (353). The memoir describes events of the first Jacobite rising of 1715. A footnote remark speculates that the memoir was written after 1745 (*RR* 395). The editor makes this assumption based on certain historical events the memoir alludes to and that have taken place around or after 1745. Readers are supposed to assume that the implied reader, Tresham, probably occupies the time frame of the actual publication of the novel, 1818. If this was not confusing already, another footnote alludes to "this winter of 1828-29," which places the editorial remarks in the mid 1800s. The subtle temporal structure — contextualizing the work in three or four time frames simultaneously — may evade the careless reader, but the awareness

that we are reading Tresham reading Osbaldistone's memoir forces the attentive reader to negotiate between several pasts and several presents.

4. Romantic Empiricism? Ambiguity and Historical Indeterminacy

The negotiation that takes place between the historian/editor, residing in the present, and his subject, located in a past, and between the reader and the text (both of the present) is played out in Scott's novels. While most of Scott's novels foreshadow editorial difficulties similar to those Carlyle's fictionalized editors face when sitting before heaps of manuscripts, Scott's editors appear to retain a certain degree of faith in their powers to tailor a seamless piece of historical textuality from the bits and scraps of the past. The mastery of the past is crucial for the construction of a historical memory that needs to fund and sustain a particular national identity. If the antiquarian project resists, as Manning argues, the grand narrative of Enlightenment historiography, then the ideology of a unified national history and consequently national identity would be in danger of being undone.

Of all Scott's novels, perhaps the most conscious of narrative and identity construction is *Redgauntlet,* a hybrid narrative employing the epistolary and memoir genre, with some straightforward third-person narration based upon rather dubious evidence and credibility. The letters are an exchange between a rich Anglo-Scottish orphan, Darsie Latimer, the hero of the novel, a romantically sensitive mind with great imaginative leaps, and Alan Fairford, Darsie's childhood Scottish friend and character foil, harboring a rational, lawyerly head. The third person narrative takes control over the textual scene (and the battle between imagination and reason) when the nameless editor decides that epistles cannot always fulfill the requirements of narrative:

> The advantage of laying before the reader, in the words of the actors themselves, the adventures which we must otherwise have narrated in our own, has given popularity to the publication of epistolary correspondence, as practiced by various great authors, and by ourselves in the preceding volume. Nevertheless, a genuine correspondence of this kind, (and Heaven forbid that it should be in any respect sophisticated by interpolations of our own!) can seldom be found to contain all in which it is necessary to instruct the reader for his full comprehension of the story. (125)

While the editor gives credit to first person accounts, there is something that first person accounts miss — the objectivity and panoramic, synchronic view of the events, perhaps. The third person narrative is short-lived at first, very quickly giving way to the memoir of the quixotic Darsie Latimer. The editor explains and justifies the shift by claiming that the memoir takes the character of direct narration and epistles, implying that the memoir is the best of both narratively constructed worlds. However, we are dealing with a Scott editor, who will once again jostle his way in, set the memoir aside, thinking it "proper" to "drop the Journal of the captive Darsie Latimer" (205) and resume direct narration. Underlying this rhetorical move is an argument that the genre of romance and the genre of realism are both limited and cannot offer the complete story — we need both. But this argument about genre and narrative is as much an argument about identity. Alan Fairford is Scottish, the direct inheritor of the Scottish Enlightenment tradition, a legal and rational mind. Darsie, on the other hand, is both Scottish and English — the union is inscribed on his body (there is a particular imprint on his face) and in his identity. However, Darsie is not aware of his Scottish Enlightenment heritage — he has been

raised English and his romantic imagination resounds in English patriotism. Thus, Scott places Darsie in a wonderfully ironic position, an apparent Englishman unaware that he *is* half-Scottish:

> I have never yet forgotten the desolate effect produced on my infant organs, when I heard your slow and broad northern pronunciation, which was to me the tone of a foreign land. I am sensible I myself have since that time acquired Scotch in perfection, and many a Scottish withal. Still the sound of the English accentuation comes to my ears as the tones of a friend; and even when heard in the mouth of some wandering beggar, it has seldom failed to charm forth my mite. You Scots, who are so proud of your own nationality, must make due allowances for that of other folks. (19)

Direct narration resumes until the end, albeit leaving room later for a letter by Dryasdust to the "author of the *Waverley* novels." Dryasdust's letter functions as the traditional epilogue that ties the loose ends for readers whose curiosity needs closure, offering answers to what happened to whom beyond the narrative, who married whom and so forth. Bringing in Dryasdust complicates matters even further, since now we know that the editor / narrator, who is really the author of the *Waverley* novels, has dealt with research conducted by Dryasdust. While the epilogue provides relative closure on the level of plot, it opens fully Pandora's box of narratorial control issues. It is not a coincidence that the following exchange between two characters takes place roughly midway through the novel, when Scott has exercised all his story-telling tailoring: "'A pen that can write, I hope?' said the old Laird. 'It can write and spell baith in the right hands," answered the Provost" (228). So, whose pen writes *Redgauntlet*?

If one would ask Georg Lukács, the pen that writes *Redgauntlet* is the rational pen of Scott, a romantic conservative and Tory ironically participating in the writing of Enlightenment history. Even though Scott imagines the possibility of a third Jacobite rising and the return of Charles Edward, the revolt is not allowed to live out its imagined possibility. The disruptive romantic force of this possible third Jacobite rising succumbs to rational, Enlightened historiography. In Lukács' Marxist terms, the possibility of Charles Edward's return cannot be sustained by the current historical conditions. In *The Historical Novel*, Lukács famously labels Scott as the father of the historical novel. While he aligns Scott with his eighteenth-century realist predecessors, Lukács claims that, while aware of history, eighteenth-century realist writers still failed to see "specific qualities of their own age historically" (20). According to Lukács, Scott is able to see his age historically, meaning that Scott is able to derive a linear projection of history, one where the past opens the pathway for the present, an organic and progressive historical development. In addition, Lukács calls for a "break with the Romantic-reactionary legend which denies to the Enlightenment any sense or understanding of history" (20). Thus Lukács takes Scott under the wing of Enlightenment and rehearses Scott in Marxist historical materialism, divorcing Scott from any Romantic tendencies. Following Lukács, a host of Scott critics and scholars have either supported Lukács' reading and reclaimed him in the name of Scottish Enlightenment historiography or have severely opposed Lukács and brought back Scott to the reactionary Romantic camp. The current champion of Lukácsian readings of Scott is Stuart Ferguson who in his "The Imaginative Construction of Historical Character: What Georg Lukács and Walter Scott Could Tell Contemporary Writers" applies historical materialism to Scott. Likewise, in "Hume, Scott and the 'Rise of Fiction'," Duncan notes that conventional

criticism of Scott "describes him as infusing the form of the novel with a dignifying, authenticating charge of historical reality" (71).

By contrast, critics who see Scott as a Romantic nationalist accuse him of manipulating history or for being simply historically inaccurate, even uninterested. As Cairns Craig explains in *Out of History*, "Scott has been consistently attacked from the 'realist' camp by those who find his historicism and his realism unconvincing," referring to Andrew Noble's bold qualification of Scott's historical novels as "anti-historical" (66). Ahistorical, perhaps, but never quite anti-historical. We should note a crucial difference between historical realism of, what I would deem the superficial / surface kind and the realism Lukács is concerned with. While Scott may be anti-historical when he reports inaccurately historical events and manipulates facts, in a Lukácsian sense he is perhaps always historical in that he tries to explain and analyze his character's behavior in terms of the material conditions that surround them. Frederick Brunswick notes that the Waverley novels engage in competing histories and that Scott, as an historian and editor of literary and political texts of the eighteenth-century, was aware of dominant historiographical perspectives. However, he still manages to qualify Scott as a writer who "boldly adopts naive assumptions on constructing history" (261). For Brunswick, the naive assumptions are embedded in folklore, which Brunswick claims Scott returns to as a "more reliable" attempt to explain the historical process "than the attempts of the rational analyst to determine cause and effect in the course of history" (261).

Some critics, unswayed by either materialist or Romantic readings, unveil the dualism inherent in Scott's historiography. In the 1951 essay "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist," David Daiches made a move towards accepting dualism in Scott, claiming "Scott was two men: he was

Edward Waverley and Baron Bradwardine" (36). In the more recent *The Civilized Imagination* (1985), Daniel Cottom asks us to "conceive of two Scotts, the lawyer and the laird" (188), and essentially posits an argument based on a class system. Cottom primarily argues that Scott's dualism stems from his own ambivalence towards change. On one end, Scott mourns the old, aristocratic order. On another end, he sees the need for middle class values and institutions. In addition, Cottom emphasizes how Scott consistently blurs the lines between these two types of orders and their respective values so that "the result is not a final choice of one side or the other but rather a continual vacillation of the narrative — and, presumably, of its ideal reader — between two kinds of values. The result, in other words, is a confusion between enlightenment and the darkness of ignorance: a blind road" (146). While I agree that Scott's narratives do not choose between the value systems, I would like to qualify Cottom's claim that Scott's texts unravel in confusion leading to a blind road — the blind road that Scott paves is actually one of constructive confusion or necessary confusion inherent in the complexity of a non-diachronic historical process. Both Daiches and Cottom are contested by Cyrus Vakil, who in "Walter Scott and Scottish Enlightenment Philosophical History" reductively argues that the radical dualism these critics note in Scott "renders Scott virtually schizoid; and nothing in Scott's life, letters or opinions of contemporaries at all suggest such a state of mind" (405). For Vakil, the arguments for dualism that make out a schizoid Scott are a problem, and he proceedes to positively situate Scott as an Enlightenment historiographer.

But why the theoretical need to distinctly place Scott within one camp or the other? In doing so, criticism that appears to want to situate Scott's work in a particular aesthetic culture (the realist aesthetic vs. the romantic aesthetic) goes back on itself, ironically performing an anti-

historical move. I propose, however, that it is the dualistic — or as I understand it, palimpsestuous — nature of Scott's narratives that makes his histories compelling and situates the narratives within the cultural context in which they are written. Scott's mind might not have been "schizoid," but the intellectual milieu within which he wrote was dualistic, sometimes to the point of contradiction. The recent critical study, *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism* (boasting essays written by critics such as Ian Duncan, Susan Manning, Cairns Craig, Ina Ferris and Jerome McGann), devoted to Scottish texts written between 1745 and 1830 engaging in the divide between Scottish Enlightenment and Romanticism, helps settle this contesting divide in Scott scholarship. The critical move explored by Duncan *et al*, when applied directly to Scott, suggests the theoretical beauty that Scott, elusive and ambiguous, seems to lie on the boundary between Enlightenment and Romanticism and his narratives happily keep guard over that border. This balancing act places Scott in the midst of the intellectual debate that marks his historical period and the academic life of Edinburgh, which then becomes the signifier of Scott's historicism.[24] Like his fellow Scotsman, Carlyle, Scott stands in the middle of the seemingly opposed faculties of Reason and Imagination, engaging in the tense discussion between the discourses of Enlightenment and Romanticism, and feeling quite at home in both. After all, the pen "can write and spell baith, in the right hands." While Enlightenment thought plays a significant role in Scott's historical perspective, so do folklore and myth, and I want to emphasize that Scott does not attempt either a rational or romantic historiographical procedure. Most compellingly, the ambiguity not only resides in the contest between Enlightenment and

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[24] For a comprehensive and lucid cultural materialist study of the rise of the romantic novel in Edinburgh and Scott's influence on other Scottish novelists, see Ian Duncan's *Scott's Shadow*.

Romantic discourse but in their inherently ambiguous discursive practices. Finally, accepting the ambiguity in Scott requires of us to reread Enlightenment and Romantic discourses.

Recent criticism of Romantic discourse returns precisely to this engagement and argues for a revision of Romantic discourse, one that is more entangled in the Enlightenment inheritance than most Romanticists acknowledge. Gavin Budge's recent *Romantic Empiricism* (2007) brings together scholars who essentially argue that empiricism is not essentially "un-Romantic" (11) and conversely that there is more of the material in the immaterial rhetoric of Romantic thought than previously claimed. Budge posits that eighteenth-century positivist, empiricist thought "cannot be legitimately opposed to philosophical idealism in this way, because it is precisely the tradition out of which philosophical idealism grew" (11). For Budge it is Scottish Common Sense philosophy that represents the idea of Romantic empiricism (14), and that provides a useful context for explaining the competing histories in Scott. This turn towards the material that is inscribed upon Romantic discourse allows us to revise Scott's narratives and see more clearly what he set out to do when he started imagining history. By reductively describing Scott's novels either as "realist" or "romantic" we simplify Scott's attitude toward the hybrid genre of the historical novel as well as towards the idea of history and the historical process. The genre of the historical novel, in Scott's hands, becomes a space where, as in Scottish Common Sense philosophy, the discourses of the Enlightenment and Romanticism conflate.

By now it is a theoretical truism that the genre of the historical novel is a hybrid that vexes problems of material representation — it deals on one end with the historical, the empirical, the referential and on another end with the aesthetic rendering of such events. In other words, Reason, constrained by the empirical, and Imagination, aspiring toward the ideal, are

pitted against one another in the most forceful manner. After all, Scott labeled his work as "historical romance," which adds a specific dimension to the genre ignored by Lukács' "historical novel." While the "novel" stands as an overarching term, "romance" points to a specific type of narrative and stands in direct contrast to "historical" narrative. If the historical novel is about probability (a probable imagining of a past) and the romance novel includes the improbable, then the schizoid nature of the historical romance refers to a probable improbability, and as readers we should not be blind to this when we reach those neat endings Scott often imposes on his narratives. Lukács' formulation of the "historical novel," while still inherently pointing to a degree of fictionality retains a greater degree of realism or historicity than "historical romance," wherein the terms virtually exclude one another.

Yet for Scott history and fiction are not mutually exclusive, and I propose that we do not read the contest between Reason and Imagination in negative terms or one that requires a necessary exclusion of one or the other category. If we situate Scott within the context of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and Scottish Common Sense philosophy, then we can accept that Reason and Imagination are cognitive faculties that complement one another. In addition, the privilege accorded to the Imagination in the Kantian aesthetic that underlies the aesthetic and philosophical zeitgeist, was translated into British aesthetic theory most famously by Coleridge

and Wordsworth, both of whom Scott read and admired.[25] Consider the following tribute to the relation between imagination and reason in Wordsworth's monumental *The Prelude*:

> Imagination, which in truth
> Is but another name for absolute strength
> And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
> And reason in her most exalted mood. (XIV 189-192)

Wordsworth elevates the imagination to the status of reason of a higher degree. This is not merely the faculty of imagination working with that of reason, but an assertion that imagination *is* reason, "reason in her most exalted mood." In addition, the connective tissue between the imagination and memory, or Wordsworthian moments of "emotions recollected in tranquility" and spots of time should be reexamined and reconsidered within historical discourse. There is something of the antiquarian sensibility in Wordsworth's spots of time, as they resist conceptualization and do not offer the grand narrative of one's personal life and identity. As M.H. Abrams suggests, Wordsworth's spots of time are disparate, unconnected moments and memories, glimpses from the past which the mind can grasp at, apprehending the moment but never quite comprehending the full significance (77-79; 387-390). These disparate moments are contained within the various and often broken and fragmented objects and relics found in Jonathan Oldbuck's study.

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[25] In a letter dated 18 May 1828, Scott writes: "I have much regard for Wordsworth" (422). In a later letter, dated 14 October 1828, Scott comments that "Wordsworth fails in receiving the universal suffrage he merits because his poetry is too subtle and metaphysical in the idea, and too blunt in the expression. He thinks like a profound philosopher often when he uses the language of common even vulgar life" (11). Scott's reflection on Wordsworth becomes fascinating when compared to Wordsworth's comment on Scott's use of language. In a 1815 letter to R.P. Gillies, he condemns Scott and James Hogg for the "insupportable slovenliness and neglect of syntax and grammar by which James Hogg's writings are disfigured" (196). While Wordsworth finds some understanding for Hogg because Hogg is not educated, "Walter Scott knows, and ought to do better" (196). He dismisses both, however: "They neither of them write a language that has any pretension to be called English" (196-197). I cannot help but wonder what happened to Wordsworth's insisting, in Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, on the aesthetics of the "humble and rustic" language of men (282-285).

In Scott's *Peveril of the Peak* (1822), the contest between Reason and Imagination is played out in the hyper-self-reflexive preface. The preface is structured as prefatory letter written by Dryasdust to Captain Clutterbuck, in which Dryasdust shares his "vision of the Author of Waverley," their "great progenitor" (58). While Dryasdust is not sure whether he was indeed visited by his creator or Scott has just passed through his dream vision, he faithfully records the conversation that transpires. Dryasdust dutifully cautions the Author of Waverley that his historical works are loosely handling matters of history: "Craving, then, your paternal forgiveness for my presumption, I only sighed at the possibility of your venturing yourself amongst a body of critics to whom, in the capacity of skillful antiquaries, the investigation of truth is an especial duty, and who may therefore visit with the more severe censure those aberrations which it is so often your pleasure to make from the path of true history" (64-5). As readers we need to remember that Dryasdust is also a "skilful antiquary," and, as we have seen earlier, Scott dismantled the antiquary's skill back in 1816. Drysasdust continues to explain: "I do apprehend that their respect for the foundation will be such that they may be apt to quarrel with the inconsistent nature of the superstructure; just as every classical traveller pours forth expression of sorrow and indignation when, in travelling through Greece, he chances to see a Turkish kiosk rising on the ruins of an ancient temple" (65), to which the Author of Waverley romantically replies: "But since we cannot rebuild the temple, a kiosk may be a pretty thing, may it not? Not quite correct in architecture, strictly and classically criticized; but presenting something uncommon to the eye, and something fantastic to the imagination, on which the spectator gazes with pleasure of the same description which arises from the perusal of an Eastern tale" (65). The reply demonstrates that the Author of Waverley values romantic conventions:

"something uncommon to the eye," "something fantastic to the imagination," and finally something that will give the reader pleasure, echoing the tenets of romantic aesthetics that Wordsworth sets up in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

Lukács convincingly demonstrates that Scott is aware of historical conditions and determination, and that Scott's ability to connect the psychology of his characters to the 'concrete conditions' within which they find themselves is what marks Scott's historical novels as historical. Yet, in reading Scott, readers constantly come across a "Turkish kiosk rising on the ruins of an ancient temple." Scott himself is quite aware of a historical moment's determinacy: in *Waverley*, Scott's narrator apologizes for "plaguing [readers] so long with old fashioned politics, and Whig and Tory, and Hanoverians and Jacobites," by explaining that his plan "requires that [he] should explain the motives on which its action proceeded; and these motives necessarily arose from the feelings, prejudices, and parties of the times" (63). Edward Waverley and Francis Osbaldistone are Scott's prototypical passive heroes who are determined by their social and historical condition and subjected by Althusserian ideological state apparatuses that constantly hail them.[26] But what would Lukács do in his reading of *Redgauntlet's* narrative moment of crisis of a literal hailing of Darsie Latimer by the country magistrate who is a bureaucratic failure incarnate, stuttering and blundering: "'And your name, young man, is — humph — ay — ha — what is it?" (170)? Darsie with full confidence answers: "'Darsie Latimer,'" and through this act of naming he reinscribes his English and denies his Scottish identity, thereby resisting the ideological interpellation.

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[26] For an authoritative study of Scott's Waverley heroes as passive see Alexander Welsh's *The Hero of the Waverley Novels.*

At this point in the narrative, Darsie does not know of his Scottish identity. "Darsie Latimer" is really "Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet," son of the feared and zealous Jacobite reactionary, who in Scott's fictitious history fought and died in the "forty-five." However, even when he finds out his true identity, he continues to resist. More significantly, the narrator, once Darsie's real name is made known, refuses to refer to him as "Arthur": "Left to his solitary meditations, Darsie (for we will still term Sir Arthur Darsie Redgauntlet of that Ilk, by the name to which the reader is habituated" (312). While the effort to retain the name by which the "reader is habituated" seems innocent enough, the role habit plays in identity and cultural construction was examined by David Hume and is related to Hume's idea of fiction and the social network (Duncan "Hume" 65). For Hume, custom makes up the "imaginary fabric" of society and relations within the social network (Duncan 65), and as Duncan explains repetition and habituation are what makes up "custom" which in turn "produces the effects of continuity and consistency that weave together an intelligible, familiar world" (65-6). It should also be noted that habit and custom are intricately linked to memory, but in an oppositional way. Ricouer claims that habit "is less marked with regard to reflexivity: one exercises know-how without noticing it" (38). The absence of reflexivity is precisely what sustains societal order, the Humean social network founded upon an "imaginary fabric" is naturalized because no one stops to reflect upon its structure — it just *is*. Memory then takes on a more reflexive and disruptive role — memories can dissent from habit. We already see this in Wordsworth's memory and spots of time, disparate, unconnected reflective moments that haunt the mind. Although the Ricoeurean distinction between habit and memory is not clearly articulated in Scott, his histories point to this divide and foreground the question of what happens when the individual lacks the memory

needed to uphold a particular communal history. Darsie does not have the memory of his Jacobite father and his father's history. The bureaucratic hailing set up by Darsie's uncle desires but fails to interpellate Darsie as an heir to the Redgauntlet, pro-Jacobite legacy.

As Darsie is being interpellated by the state apparatus, unconsciously resisting his identity, Redgauntlet becomes agitated: "the furrows of the brow above the eyes became livid and almost black, and were bent into a semi-circular, or rather elliptical form, above the junction of the eye-brows" (174). Redgauntlet's anger is understandable as his entire political project is invested in Darsie. Darsie is the missing link in sustaining Jacobite memory. Darsie, however, does not own a Jacobite memory, and while he is a remnant from the past, he is devoid of history because he is devoid of memory. The fact that Darsie does not have an active memory of his past and Scottish origin may make him an easy target for manipulation. However, as always with Scott, there is another side to lacking memory: the very fact that Darsie has no memory liberates him from the past. Readers and Darsie immediately remember the blind violin beggar Wandering Willie's, tale, and Darsie explains that "the tale, when told, awakened a dreadful vision of infancy, which the withering and blighting look now fixed on me again forced on my recollection, but with much more vivacity. Indeed I was so much surprised, and, I must add, terrified, at the vague ideas which were awakened in my mind by this fearful sign, that I kept my eyes fixed on the face in which it was exhibited, as on a frightful vision" (174). For Darsie, this incident teaches him to know "what it was to sustain a moment's real sorrow" (175), and he becomes "anxious about the past and the future; those periods with which human life has so little connection" (175). Darsie will soon learn to trace the connection between the past and future. At one moment, he catches "the reflection of [his] countenance in a large antique mirror," observing

"the real or imaginary resemblances which [his] countenance, at that moment, bore to that of Herries" (181). He notes that his fate must be "somehow strangely interwoven" with Redgauntlet's, and we will encounter Darsie before a mirror yet again, folding his brows "in vain into a thousand complicated wrinkles [. . .] obliged to conclude, either that the supposed mark on [his]brow was altogether imaginary, or that it could not be called forth by voluntary effort" (188). The stakes are rather high in the latter scenario, for if the mark cannot be made by "voluntary effort" then it speaks to hereditary origin, to a fate that cannot be escaped. And that is exactly what Scott has in store for his hero: "While I was moulding my visage like a mad player, the door suddenly opened, and the girl of the house entered. Angry and ashamed at being detected in my singular occupation, I turned round sharply, and, I suppose, chance produced the change on my features," as the girl "started back, with her 'Don't ye look so now — don't ye, for love's sake — you be as like the ould Squoire" (189). For Darsie, it is chance, mere accident, that produces the inscription of the past on his face — it is chance because Darsie does not have the memory of his family's history; his identity is not constructed through memory. For the girl, who can observe and trace the inscription from one Redgauntlet face to another, the change in Darsie's features takes on mythical proportions.

Even when Redgauntlet shares the family history with Darsie, Darsie still remains ignorant of his identity and fails to connect the traces of the past. Darsie first learns of the Redgauntlet curse from Wandering Willie. Darsie eerily introduces Wandering Willie's tale, emphasizing his story-telling skills: "He commenced his tale accordingly, in a distinct narrative tone of voice, which he raised and depressed with considerable skill; at times sinking almost into a whisper, and turning his clear but sightless eyeballs upon my face, as if it had been possible for

him to witness the impression which his narrative made upon my features" (86). Wandering Willie takes over Darsie's epistolary narrative, and readers are immersed in his fantastic tale. The tale concerns Willie's grandfather who comes to pay rent to Sir Robert Redgauntlet, who "ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows, that men saw the visible mark of a horse-shoe in his forehead, deep-dinted, as if it had been stamped there" (89). I note this description of Robert Redgauntlet as this is the first time this image has been imprinted on Darsie's mind. Upon payment and right before Redgauntlet issues a receipt to Willie's grandfather, Redgauntlet mysteriously dies. When Sir Robert's son, John, arrives to take over the estate, he demands payment from Willie's grandfather, who cannot prove that his dues have been settled. Sir John insists on proof: "I want but a *talis qualis* evidence, Stephen" (92), and more forcefully: "if there be a knave amongst us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove" (93). Documented proof overrides the actual referential event of Stephen's payment. However, Stephen is able to prove payment because, in the world of tales, fantastic events take place: one evening, the past and present collide. Stephen meets Sir Robert's ghost, who honors his payment from the grave and writes him a receipt. Not only does the past and present intersect, but the supernatural provides the empirical evidence of the cash payment — a ghost hands over the receipt. End of tale. Ultimately, in Willie's tale, the past has rectified the wrong of the present; it carries with itself the truth beyond documents and written records.

Similarly to Willie's tale, Redgauntlet's story seeks to conflate both empirical detail and romantic idealism — romantic empiricism at play. Redgauntlet explains how his ancestor, Alberick Redgauntlet, fought the king of Scotland, Edward Baliol to the point of zealous blindness. Coming across Baliol and thinking that the prostate body of his son is dead, he jumps

over his son's body to catch up with Baliol. At the moment at which his horse jumps, his son rises and the horse's hoof hits the young man on the head, killing him instantly. The horse-shoe impression is explained away if we agree, as Coleridge often asks us, to suspend disbelief, and the tale is impressed with the tragic accidental murder of a son. The hoof imprints and the trace of the past are impressed on the faces of the Redgauntlet clan and, as fantastic as they appear, impose an empirical claim upon Darsie.

While Darsie's face carries a trace of the past, it is a palimpsestuous account of the family history and tragic past, and as such it writes and overwrites the past, creating a space for an alternate history. Darsie *wills* and *imagines* otherwise. Like its predecessors, *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*, *Redgauntlet* examines identity construction (more appropriately to Scott's historical moment read in terms of *bildung*) and its relation to one's memory, past, and the nation. In spite of the apparent historical determinism, there is an underlying narrative of transcendent principles. Scott makes a point of claiming that his narratives transcend historical determinism in *Waverley* and *Ivanhoe*, and he will aggressively extend this practice to *Redgauntlet.*

In the Introductory to *Waverley,* Scott explains that his tale is "more a description of men than manners" (35), and an examination of men is inseparable from describing "those passions common to all men in all stages of society, and which alike agitate the human heart, whether it throbbed under the steel corslet of the fifteenth century, the brocaded coat of the eighteenth, or the blue frock and white dimity waistcoat of the present day" (35-36). Manners are historically determined but passions are not — passions transcend history. Although this passage seems to oppose Scott's Enlightenment project and support a more Romantic historiography, the distinction that Scott makes between manners and passions upholds both historical discourses.

On one end, Scott foreshadows Carlyle's Teufelsdröckhian clothes philosophy by ironically asserting that even in the midst of historical contingencies, transcendental drives abound: "the deep impulse is the same in both cases; and the proud peer who can now only ruin his neighbour according to law, by protracted suits, is the genuine descendant of the baron who wrapped the castle of his competitor in flames, and knocked him on the head as he endeavoured to escape from the conflagration" (36). In this following description of the "deep ruling impulse" that binds humanity, there is little of enlightened progress and much antithesis to the Lukácsian ideal. The impulse to ruin the neighbor is universal, but the contingencies have changed. The universal impulse appears more sinister as it hides behind the word of the Law and legal language, turning into a domesticated, normative drive to ruin the neighbor. The same sentiment is threaded in *Ivanhoe's* "Dedicatory Epistle," where Scott in the guise of Laurence Templeton explains how "opinions, habits of thinking, and actions, however influenced by the peculiar state of society, must still, upon the whole, bear a strong resemblance to each other" (10). He explicitly dwells on the juxtaposition between past and present during the scene of Rebecca's trial:

> It was a scene of bustle and life, as if the whole vicinage had poured forth its inhabitants to a village wake, or rural feast. But the evident desire to look on blood and death, is not peculiar to these dark ages [. . .] Even in our own days, when morals are better understood, and execution, a bruising match between two professors, a riot, or a meeting of radical reformers, collects a considerable hazard to themeselves immense crowds of spectators, otherwise little interested, excepting to see how matters are to be conducted, and whether the heroes of the day are, in the heroic language of insurgent tailors, *flints* or *dunghills*. (382)

Like the juxtaposition of setting fire to a castle with filing suit against another person, Scott removes the attraction the medieval public trial had for the spectator who is not directly involved, and replaces it with contemporary riots and meetings of radical reformers, who equally attract spectators for superficial reasons. Taking into consideration Scott's insistence on the universal passions that bind a community together complicates the Lukácsian reading. On the other hand, Scott does demonstrate that Edward Waverley must resign his romantic sensibilities and enter in the reality of his life (his Englishness). These complicated negotiations firmly situate Scott within the contested dialectic of Enlightenment materialism and Romantic idealism — Scott pulls at both, setting up an empirical reality, clothing it with transcendent principles.

To further illuminate the Enlightenment / Romantic dichotomy in Scott, I suggest we turn to the earlier, pre-Marxist Lukács. In *The Theory of the Novel*, which I suggest we read as an underwriting of Lukács' palimpsestuous theoretical work, Lukács explains that the historico-philosophical conditioning of the novel marks the "fusion of the heterogeneous and discrete components into an organic whole which is then abolished over and over again" (84). Scott's heroes consistently attempt to fuse their personal desires and ideals with the material conditions that surround them, and they consistently fail: either the failure is marked, as in the case of Flora, by banishment from reality and the text itself or, in the case of Waverley, by moving the hero from his world of romantic ideals to a world of enlightened practicality and rationality. The "novelistic ethic," Lukács tells us, "is a double one" (85). The novelist's "reflexion consists of giving form to what happens to the idea in real life, of describing the actual nature of this process and of evaluating and considering its reality" (85). This reflection precisely aligns with the argument that Lukács uses later in his Marxist turn to label Scott as the originator of the

historical novel. Yet the earlier Lukács further explains that "this reflexion, however, in turn becomes an object for reflexion; it is itself only an ideal, only subjective and postulative; it, too, has a certain destiny in a reality which is alien to it, and this destiny, now purely reflexive and contained within the narrator himself, must also be given form" (85). Scott's prefaces can be understood as example of such reflections upon his historical reflections, which are always consumed by loss and melancholy. While Scott yearns for the past that embodies a particular ideal, he is always consciously aware that the past cannot be sustained by the present. On one end, Scott traces a culture's progress and development which is contingent upon material conditions, wherein each step forward effaces the previous one; on the other end, he romantically grasps at a transcendental that binds humanity and subsumes humanity's historical process. As I reflect on Scott, I reflect on Lukács' own reflection in the form of the 1962 preface to *The Theory of the Novel,* in which Lukács professes his initial attempt to turn away from Kant towards Hegel. According to Lukács, Kantianism has created a "chasm between timeless value and historical realisation of value" (16), and as a philosophical critique it became inadequate. Lukács explains how he wanted to follow Hegel's move towards "intellectual comprehension of permanence within change and of our inner change within the enduring validity of the essence" (16). To come back to Scott: we may, Scott writes, understand morals better today, but passions are universal and timeless, and ultimately uncontrollable by morals.

Traditional Scott criticism influenced by the Marxist Lukács, argues that Scott's historical narratives repeatedly endorse the benefits of the Union of 1707, demonstrating Scotland's need to integrate itself in English social and political culture in the name of universal progress, forging the modern image of Britain. However, while Scott's novels appear to endorse

the union and cultural assimilation and integration in the name of universal progress and unity, there is always something unsettling, awkward and ambiguous in his texts — moments of interruption that put the question of an organic, linear historical process to the surface, memories of pasts that offer the possibility of a different historical unfolding. More recent critics, notably Yoon Sun Lee and Caroline McCracken-Fleisher, tap into Scott's ambiguity.

Lee's *Nationalism and Irony* (2004) discusses the works of Burke, Scott, and Carlyle, all non-English conservatives, who, according to Lee redefine Romantic nationalism by making room for irony in the representations of the British nation. According to Lee, these writers understood that belonging to a nation is not necessarily a "spontaneous expression of a natural sense of belonging," but a "political act performed in a situation configured by law, power, and competing interests" (11). For Lee this "ironic nationalism" can be "used to temper and meet" demands of the various identities and interests that make up Great Britain. Lee's argument illuminates the awkward ending of *Waverley,* where it is obvious that Edward Waverley does not participate in his English identity due to any organic sensibility. McCarken-Fleisher's *Possible Scotlands* (2005) argues that Scott's novels participate in a complex relation between narration and narrative. Following Homi Bhabha's idea of nation as narration, McCracken-Fleisher argues that Scott understands the nation as a construct that is always in a state of development and change. His narratives construct and reconstruct, imagine, and reimagine the nation in Benedict Anderson's sense. McCracken-Fleisher sees this relation exercised in Scott's questioning of the genre and his constant blurring of lines between fiction and history. Like Lee, McCracken-Fleisher politically charges Scott, subverting his apparent conservative politics to the idea of a

"possible Scotlands" ideology and, to allude to her work's subtitle, the "story of tomorrow." However, as Lee argues "ironic nationalism" may still be conducted in the name of the union.

Critics like Cairns Craig are highly suspicious of Scott's "happy" endings that are invested in the future. While at the end of *Waverley*, we have the Union of 1707 reinscribed and validated in the union between Waverley and Rose Bradwardine, there is still a feeling of a "forced" ending, and as Craig argues in *Out of History* (1996), "at the opening of each new novel the future turns out to have acquired again the features of a barbaric past which, once more, has to be expunged from the kingdom of historical progress" (46). If we accept Craig's formulation, then Scott, while endorsing a particular reality, does so only on the surface. There is always a Lukácsian reflection outside the text, and as the early Lukács says, "this insight, this irony, is directed both at [the novelist's] heroes, who in their poetically necessary youthfulness, are destroyed by trying to turn his faith into reality, and against his own wisdom, which has been forced to see the uselessness of the struggle and the final victory of reality" (85).

Consider the seemingly innocent effort that goes into refurbishing Baron Bradwardine's estate, which can be understood as a palimpsest: "not only have the felled trees been removed, but, their stumps being grubbed up, and the earth round them levelled and sown with grass, every mark of devastation, unless to an eye intimately acquainted with the spot, was already totally obliterated" (483). The entire estate "seemed as much as possible restored to the state in while he [the Baron] had left it when he assumed arms some months before," expecting "that the heavy stable, which had been burnt down, were replaced by buildings of a lighter and more picturesque appearance." (484). In short, the estate "bore no tokens of the violence which had so lately descended upon them" (484). Scott repeats more than once that the appearance of devastation

has been effaced in one way or another. By obliterating any mark that recalls the violent event of the 1745 rebellion, the event itself is in danger of falling into oblivion. Thus, the repetition is not innocent, and the event of the Jacobite rising exposes itself in the very insistence of effacing it. Scott remarks that only an "eye intimately acquainted with the spot" may see marks of devastation, may remember the violent event. To those who witnessed the rebellion, who hold the living memory of the historical event, the true state of the Bradwardine estate will be visible. This idea holds a serious implication when coupled with the fact that the restoration has effaced all marks of the violent past — when the eye witnesses die, their memories will die with them, and the estate will only live on in its glorious and stable state. The uncomfortable reminder that a Jacobite rising did take place is completely removed from the surface of history, its materiality is erased except through the narrative. Although readers may experience satisfaction that the sympathetic character of the Baron is restored to his estate, this estate is no longer the seat of a Scottish Highlander. This estate has been bought and improved upon, appropriated by the English Waverley. One should also not forget that just outside this picture perfect restoration, the dung-hills of Tully-Veolan probably still "ascend in noble-emulation" (77). On one hand, Scott appeases his readers' wishes and taps into the rhetoric of progress. The yearning for stability and a desire after progress at the expense of the past are fulfilled. On the other hand, his insistence that the original, Scottish face of the estate has been effaced puts this idea of progress to question.

The Bradwardine estate can be read as a metaphor for the union, but this metaphor does not readily reconcile its opposites, and the tension of the juxtaposition remains, supporting Lee's argument of ironic nationalism. Both Barwardine and Waverley have a false consciousness of

their positions. Bardwardine is symbolically replaced in the seat of his estate, but we as readers become eyewitness to the narrative Scott produces and can neither forget that Waverley is now the rightful owner of the estate nor that its Scottishness has been effaced. Waverley's position is no less artificial: Scott reminds us that there are "eyes intimately acquainted with the spot," there are memories that are not contained within the rhetoric of the Union, memories that are in excess of even Scott's own narrative, but that leave behind a remnant that is only almost effaced.

In fact, Scott intimately acquaints the readers' eyes with the spot that betrays what has happened, and uncovers a few traces that, if we choose to follow them, form the reality of the past. I suggest that we palimpsestuously retrace our reading backwards to the moment when Scott introduces us to Baron Bradwardine, an embodied anachronism and persistent interruption of the current historical moment, whose "language and habits were as heterogeneous as his external appearance" (87). In facing Bradwardine, the readers and Waverley come in closer contact with the past, which although contained can erupt at any moment. We are told that Bradwardine after "his *démêlé* with the law of high treason in 1715," kept a low profile, "living in retirement, conversing almost entirely with those of his own principles in the vicinage" (87). However, living in retirement is not quite congruent with solely conversing with "those of his own principle." The past is apparently not in retirement, but perhaps it can never be. It is helpful to turn to Coleridge here, who teaches us how to understand, not the Jacobite, but the Jacobin:

> The word implies a man, whose affections have been warmly and deeply interested in the cause of general freedom, who has hoped all good and honourable things both of and for mankind. Jacobin affirm[s] that no man can ever become altogether an apostate to Liberty, who has at any time been sincerely

> and fervently attached to it. His hopes will burn like the Greek fire, hard to be extinguished, and easily rekindling. Even when he despises of the cause, he will yet wish, that it had been successful. And even when private interests have warped his public character, his convictions will remain, and his wishes often rise up in rebellion against his outward actions and public views. (368)

Coleridge's 1802 essay "Once a Jacobin, Always a Jacobin," could have easily, if his politics had been thus inclined, assumed a slippage in the noun and been titled "Once a Jacobite, Always a Jacobite." Notwithstanding the national, political, and historical difference between the Jacobin and Jacobite, the romantic once and always attitude towards a group with a particular political and ideological leaning resembles that which Scott depicts through Bradwardin's Highland imagination. Coleridge's once / always dichotomy supports a rhetoric of permanence within a fluid historical process. There is something unreal — romantic — enfolding the Bardwardine estate, something once and always. Its calmness and beauty is set against the harsh reality of Tully-Veolan, which is "depressing; for it argued, at the first glance, at least a stagnation of industry" (75). The narrator continues to observe the dismal scene: "there appeared behind the cottages a miserable wigwam, compiled of earth, loose stones, and turf, where the wealthy might perhaps shelter a starved cow or sorely galled horse" (76). The descriptions of Tully-Veolan seem to be from the narrator's perspective — we do not get a sense that we recognize the harsh reality from Waverley's vantage point. The final scene, sums up the irony of the village: "almost every hut was fenced in front by a huge black stack of turf on side of the door, while on the other the family dung-hill ascended in noble emulation" (76). And just "about a bow shot from the end of the village" (76), a bow shot from noble, emulating dung-hills,

Waverley comes across the avenue "running between a double row of very ancient horse-chestnuts, planted alternately with sycamores, which rose to such huge height, and flourished so luxuriantly" (77). The estate, like its inhabitants, appear to stand outside of the real: "The solitude and repose of the whole scene seemed almost romantic; and Waverley [. . .] excited by this confined and quiet scene [. . .] forgot the misery and dirt of the hamlet he had left behind" (77). The estate resides in the ideal past, separated from the material, imperfect present solely by a gate. Because the estate is romanticized, it is something to watch over; it becomes a site of interruption and eruption.

Barwardine himself lives on this border between the past (locked within the gates of his estate) and the present (Tully-Veolan and beyond), and he is capable of negotiating the difference, best seen in his ability to give a toast to the King's health but leave to the "consciences of his guests to drink to the sovereign *de facto* or *de jure*, as their politics inclined" (92). Yet, Bradwardine's language and appearance is not homogeneous and grates the present; he is a constant reminder of 1715 and a proleptic sign of the ensuing 1745 rising. While we may in passing accept this gentlemanly acknowledgment of the relative status of the sovereign — the sovereign may be *de facto* and he may be *de jure*, as our politics incline, the very idea that one of these royal heads is *de facto* sovereign *de jure* complicates the actual status of the current Hanoverian sovereign and the memory and hope of the Pretender.

In addition to placing Waverley face to face with the remnant of Bradwardine, Scott places Waverley at the scene of the ruined Bradwardine estate. In stark contrast to his initial romantic introduction to Tully-Veolan, as the estate lies in hazardous ruin before him and the readers: "he approached the village of Tully-Veolan, with feeling and sentiments — how

different from those which his attended his first entrance! [. . .] Upon entering the court-yard, Edward saw the fears realised which these circumstances had excited. The place had been sacked by the King's troops, who, in wanton mischief, had even attempted to burn it; and though the thickness of the walls had resisted the fire, unless to a partial extent, the stables and outhouses were totally consumed" (433). Everything is in "broken and shattered," reduced to fragments, "wasted and defaced" (434). Whereas Waverley refurbishes the Bradwardine estate, whereas Scott refurbishes his own narrative, he does let Waverley and his readers witness what has happened, and Scott slyly reminds us during the elevated descriptions of the improved estate, that someone is intimately acquainted with what has been. In that sense, the past cannot be as easily effaced and it remains embodied in the present.

Waverley's "happy" ending and *Redgauntlet's* scene of hailing and marking of identity work well with Althusserian theories of subjection and the relation between identity and ideology, but, as Ricoeur teaches us, identity is also intricately linked to memory, which is in turn connected to history, and these linkages are not sufficiently explored within the frame of Scott's historical narratives. In a journal entry dated 18th October, 1826, Scott reflects on the proliferation of novels that he considered imitations of his own work. He notes that the imitators have one fault: "they have to read and consult antiquarian collections to get their information — I write because I have long since read such works and possess thanks to a strong memory the information which they have to seek for" (214). According to Scott these younger novelists drag in "historical details by head and shoulders, so that the interest of the main piece is lost in minute descriptions of events which do not affect its progress" (214-15). He admits to himself that he has "sin'd in this way," but he learned to correct this mistake of overburdening the story with

historical incidents. As a note to himself, he writes: "Must not let the background eclipse the principle figures — the frame overpower the picture" (215). Two ideas are interesting to me here: First, Scott privileges his memory over immediate, direct consultation of historical documents and books. Even though he too consulted these at some point, there is an allusion that something happens to the knowledge derived from books between the time of reading and using the material to construct the story — perhaps memory shapes the information in particular imaginative ways. Memory is the vessel of the past's translation into history and a link between the historical material and imagination. Second, Scott cautions that the frame must not overpower the picture. The structure in the sense of the historical base or historical frame must not overpower the content, the aesthetic image of the experience of the past.

Even studies on Scott that dig deeply into the relation between nation and narration do not examine memory, which when we consider the role of collective memory in nation formation is quite a curious omission. Scott's historical narratives function as tripartite structures of historical representation, dialectically situating event, memory, and identity formation. The examples I have just traced, the character of Bradwardine, his estate pre-1745 and post 1745 all function as memory — Scott produces a memory of a fictional Baron and a fictional estate, but these also reflect in a Lukácsian sense a reality and real memories. Bradwardine's identity is linked to the memory of his political ideology, both of which are anachronistic within the current political climate. As Coleridge poetically explains it, the hope and wish to see a cause fulfilled (even when the cause is out of place), is like a Greek fire, difficult to extinguish and easily rekindled. Ricouer points out that the fragility of identity is linked to the fragility of memory

(*MHF* 81), and Scott's narrative hinges upon this complex relation between identity and memory (personal and collective).

In Darsie Latimer's case, the issue is even more ambiguous. Darsie does not have a memory of his real origins, or of his real name; he only has a memory of being Darsie Latimer. The questions of the past's role in identity formation significantly complicate our attitude toward the past — is the past a positive generative force or is the past a degenerate agent, awkwardly persisting in the present? This dynamic is congruent with the very idea of historical determinism that ambiguously underlies Scott's texts, and not always in the way Lukács desires and claims.

Darsie stands up to his uncle's determinist view of life and one's position in the historical process:

> I call your attention to the fact, that I, as well as you, am actuated by impulses, the result either of my own free will, or the consequences of the part which is assigned to me by my destiny. These may be — nay, at present they are — in direct contradiction to those by which you are actuated; and how shall we decide which shall have precedence? — *You* perhaps feel yourself destined to act as my jailor. I feel myself, on the contrary, destined to attempt and effect my escape. One of us must be wrong, but who can say which errs till the event has decided betwixt us? (194)

The Marxist Lukács might not accept Darsie's proclamations of "free will" and "destiny." Through this speech Darsie appears as an active agent (ironically, however, he is *captive* and later in the narrative made even more passive as Scott dresses him in women's clothes and makes him saddle a horse in a female position). I want to pause, however, on the last sentence wherein

Scott's ambiguity lies: "but who can say which errs till the event has decided betwixt us?" Keeping in mind what Darsie says earlier, we are inclined to understand this sentence to mean that Darsie and Redgauntlet will know who is right when finally one of them pushes the moment to its crisis and *acts* and through acting creates the event. Scott also slyly introduces the notion of relativity: Redgauntlet "perhaps feel[s] [him]self destined to act as [Darsie's] jailor," *but* Darsie feels himself destined to escape. For a moment, both are right within their own framing of the historical moment and its necessity. Yet wording also suggests that the "event" is destiny; the event itself will decide who errs — the event or destiny is privileged over and overrides subjective will. In other words, the event as destiny dictates the will, and the dynamics between the event and subjective action complicate Darsie's notion of "free will" and its role in the historical process. In addition, in Scott free will stands as something intricately connected to forgetting — one must forget the past, erase the past in order to exercise free will. Conversely, destiny is weaved into the past and the memory of the past; it dictates and historically determines the course of the present and subsequently the future without regard to the subjective wills of the historical actors. Thus, Scott's novels appear to stand on the border between remembering and forgetting.

5. Jacobite Afterlife: Imprints and Traces and Self-Effacing Counterhistory

To pursue the question of Scott's view of historical determinism and its relation to historical erasure, I propose we follow Ricoeur and start from Aristotle's *Theaetetus* and what Socrates has to say: "Whatever is impressed upon the wax we remember and know so long as the image remains in the wax; whatever is obliterated or cannot be impressed, we forget and do not

know" (191d). Thus, Old Mortality makes it his life work never to let the inscriptions on the tombs completely fade, and Scott implicitly cautions us against repairs that erase any markings of the past. In *Waverley* and *Old Mortality,* Scott emphasizes the past as a trace, and hints at the possibility of losing the past if the traces are not preserved. While *Waverley* weaves an intricate argument for the benefits of the union and privileges the rational there is still a persistent longing and a romantic / nostalgic need for the past in the present. In writing *Waverley,* Scott has retold and reinscribed into collective memory a time in Scottish history that may be in danger of being forgotten. *Waverley* vacillates between remembering and forgetting. On one end, the industrial progress and the economic improvements that Scotland has undergone due to its union with England, the "total eradiction of the Jacobite" culture irons out the tension that is Scotland. Like Bradwardine's estate, Scotland has been retouched and refurbished to no longer bear the signs of its violent past. On another end, Scott, the remembrancer, pushes the past into the present and impresses it on the pages of his novel. This is best explained in Scott's postscript to *Waverley*:

> There is no European nation which, within the course of half a century, or little more, has undergone so complete a change as the kingdom of Scotland. The effects of the insurrection of 1745 — the destruction of the patriarchal power of the Higland chiefs — the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions of the Lowland nobility and barons — the total eradiction of the Jacobite party, which averse to intermingle with the English, or adopt their customs, long continued to pride themselves upon maintaining ancient Scottish manners and customs — commmenced this innovation [. . .] This race has now almost entirely vanished from the land, and with it, doubtless, much absurd political prejudice — but also

> many living examples of singular and disinterested attachments to the prinicples of loyalty, which they received from their fathers, and of old Scottish faith, hospitality, worth, and honour. (492)

The postscript, which Scott's subtitle tells us "should have been a preface" (491) sums up *Waverley's* argument: progress is positive, but we should be aware that in the name of progress we might lose those singular aspects that are worth cherishing. Lockhart describes an incident in 1806, where Scott participated in a debate, at the Faculty of Advocates, surrounding the reform of Scottish legal procedure:

> When the meeting broke up, he walked across the Mound, on his way to Castle Street, between Mr Jeffrey and another of his reforming friends, who complimented him on the rhetorical powers he had been displaying, and would willingly have treated the subject-matter of the discussion playfully. But his feelings had been moved far beyond their apprehension: he exclaimed: 'No, no — 'tis no laughing matter; little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain.' And so saying, he turned round to conceal his agitation — but not until Mr Jeffrey saw tears gushing down his cheek. (##)

Notwithstanding Lockhart's pathetic rhetoric that draws a Scott with "tears gushing down his cheek," and Duncan's caution that Lockhart misrepresents Scott, the poignancy of Scott's sentiments remains significant for it reflects the complex attitude towards reform depicted in his novels, the agitation felt when one realizes that that the current historical moment dictates the erasure of the past. In the process of reading *Waverley,* we lose Flora, who at least this reader

grew to love and admire, and we are left with Edward whom Scott himself, in a 1814 letter to a friend, referred to as "a sneaking imbecile" (qtd in Hook). Similarly to Flora's dignified resignation to the events that lead to her expulsion, Scott expels Redgauntlet to the Scottish Monastery at Ratisbon in Germany, where he lives out his days in seclusion and extreme self-effacement: "it was remarked, that though he listened with interest and attention, when Britain, or particularly Scotland, became the subject of conversation, yet he never either introduced or prolonged the subject, never used the English language, never inquired after English affairs, and, above all, never mentioned his family" (379). We also learn from Oldbuck, who writes the epilogue, that there was an attempt to have him sainted, an undertaking that was prevented due to the probability that the relic Redgauntlet wore around his neck — a silver box storing a lock of hair — was

> taken from the head of a brother of the deceased Prior, who had been executed for his adherence to the Stuart family in 1745-6; and the motto, *Haud obliviscendum* [never to be forgotten], seemed to intimate a tone of mundane feeling and recollection of injuries, which made it at least doubtful whether, even in the quiet and gloom of cloister, Father Hugo had forgotten the sufferings and injuries of the House of Redgauntlet. (380)

It is this paragraph that concludes the novel. Redgauntlet would never be able to be integrated into a British nation because he cannot leave his memories behind. The Scots cannot be subjected to Englishness without giving up their memories. Implicit in Redgauntlet's hold over the past is an injunction not to forget. Not forgetting also implies the past's persistent nature — it permeates the present. The expulsion of Flora and Redgauntlet respectively (and we may

also think of *Ivanhoe's* Rebecca) serve Scott as a strategy to invite sympathy — readers are faced with the difficult and painful position of one who is in exile, who is erased from the historical process but still holds onto a past that can no longer be sustained. It is here that Scott perhaps reaches a particular ethical stance in his historiography. The reader cannot help but wonder whether Scott, whose early writing career focused on retelling Scottish ballads and history, would rather live in a world inhabited with Flora, the bard and guardian of the Scottish past, and Redgauntlet, who cherishes the past, or Waverley who appropriates and in refurbishing destroys the nation's heritage.

Because the endings of *Waverley* and *Redgauntlet* rest on the tension between remembering and forgetting, the arguments of the novels' endorsement of historical determinacy and historical erasure is complicated and engulfed in ambiguity. In *Redgauntlet,* Scott teases out this complex ambiguity to an extreme. Extending Rohan Maitzen's argument that *Redgauntlet* refuses a "teleological and deterministic philosophy of history, proposing a specific function for fiction in historical understanding" (170), I argue that *Redgauntlet* is a palimpsestous revision of the Jacobite memory and a willful act of historical erasure and an anxious attempt at freeing a collective memory from the past. *Redgauntlet*'s impulse is to invent a different history, a history in which the actors have a choice. Yet *Redgauntlet's* exercise of choice is also consciously ridden with anxiety over the past. The past disruptively overwrites the present. If in *Waverley*, Scott controlled his impulse to disturb the present stability of the union, he forcefully disturbs the historical process in *Redgauntlet* as it boldly asks what if there were another Jacobite rebellion?

In many ways, Darsie and Waverley are similar. Both are caught up in a Jacobite revolution without much of their own doing. When we first meet Waverley, we are faced with a

young man, who does not quite know what he wants from life. Scott often describes him as an irrational youth, easily seduced by more "romantic" notions of life and manners. Most criticism follows what Scott on the surface wants us to accept: Edward Waverley's youthful, romantic sensibilities will be modulated into the more mature, rational Waverley. Such a reading enables us to argue that Scott dismisses romantic notions of identity and history in favor of a rationalist, Enlightenment *bildung*. But this reading works all too easily for a writer who often plays with his readers. We have already seen that the ending that appears to endorse the union at once raises the question of the union, signaling to the uncomfortable realization that the stability of the union and the progressive historical process depends on fiction, the *Waverley* novel itself, and on a naive "sneaking imbecile." The grand fiction of the historical process and of Edward Waverley is the fiction of historical determinism.

Redgauntlet's engagement with historical determinism is complicated because it situates free will and destiny in a dialectical relationship. In addition, historical determinism is made even more problematic because *Redgauntlet* in effect rests on the reversal of the historical process. In *Waverley,* the argument rested on the Edward Waverley's *bildung*. Waverley's involvement in the Jacobite insurrection of 1745 is in many ways by pure accident and enforced by his romantic interest in Flora, and his own romantic sensibilities. Yet, Waverley's self is constantly depicted as a space upon which Enlightenment rationality and Romantic irrationality collide and compete. Scott makes a point that Waverley "felt an inexpressible repugnance at the idea of being accessary to the plague of civil war" (222). Waverley, however, seems to quickly repress this "inexpressible repugnance" when he sees himself clothed in the "garb of Old Gaul" (305). Scott brilliantly plays with Waverley when he dresses him in Highland garb:

> Our hero having now fairly assumed the 'garb of the Old Gaul', well calculated as it was to give an appearance of strength to a figure, though tall and well-made, was rather elegant than robust, I hope my fair readers will excuse him if he looked at himself in the mirror more than once, and could not help acknowledging that the reflection seemed that of a very handsome young fellow. (306)

As if this scene was not enough to diminish the importance of our reluctant revolutionary, Scott playfully continues to heighten the ridiculous position Waverley has found himself in:

> In fact, there was no disguising it. His light-brown hair — for he wore no periwig, notwithstanding the universal fashion of the time — became the bonnet which surmounted it. His person promised firmness and agility, to which the ample folds of the tartan added an air of dignity. His blue eyes seemed of that kind,
>
> Which melted in love, and which kindled in war;
>
> and an air of bashfulness, which was in reality the effect of want of habitual intercourse with the world, gave interest to his features, without injuring their grace or intelligence. (306)

Observing Waverley transformed, all Evan Dhu can say is: " 'He's a pratty man — a very pratty man'" (306). The would-be Highland warrior is unmade in the very act of making, an anachronism in the very moment of unfolding. In the end, Waverley's entrance into adulthood is marked by his rationality and embracing of his position in the historical process — the heir to his father's temperate, rational Whig politics: "the romance of his life has ended" and "its real history had now commenced. He was soon called upon to justify his pretensions by reason and philosophy" (415).

Waverley's entrance into his "real history" haunts the pages to follow. Flora, whose very name inscribes the untamable nature, the dark force of romantic ideals, holds true to her political and religious beliefs, but her exile is more real than any other. She will spend the remainder of her life in a Catholic convent in France. On one end, Scott expels her from the Union because Flora represents the disruptive force that prevents progress, but Scott is sympathetic to this character, and the romance of Flora's life is her real history. Scott is very careful to distinguish between Flora's "pure passion" (170), her pure political faith and love of clan "which was almost hereditary" (169), i.e. natural, and her brother's "tinctured" and "tainted" political belief. Fergus, although the Chief of the Highlanders, does not carry the burden of political ideals. He acts in history with a "view of interest and advancement" (168). It is thus difficult to be a sympathetic reader when in the final meeting between Waverley and Fergus, Fergus' seeming idealism is betrayed by the narrator as delusional: "'You see the compliment they pay to our Highland strength and courage — we have lain chained here like wild beasts [. . .] and when they free us, they send six soldiers with loaded muskets to prevent our taking the castle by storm!' Edward afterwards learns the ironic truth that "these severe precautions had been taken in consequence of a desperate attempt of the prisoners to escape, in which they had very nearly succeeded" (473). Here, the determinism of the failed revolution is apparent. The prisoners' will and choice to escape is not in the name of the rebellion, but in the name of escaping and admitting failure.

By contrast, in *Redgauntlet* Darsie's situation is more complex and clouded in ambiguity. Immediately labeled as a romantic mind, Darsie also has a rational side to him. However, it is precisely Darsie's romantic sensibilities that aid him in resisting his uncle and taking part in a rebellion against the Whig government. The image of Darsie overwrites his predecessor,

Waverley. On Darsie's mind, uncontrollable romantic and temperate rational sensibilities operate synchronically rather than, as in *Waverley*, sequentially. As I have mentioned earlier, the first part of the novel is written in epistolary form; we read the exchange of letters between Darsie and Alan. The letters present an implicit argument about the nature of the historical novel, or to use Scott's more apt formulation, historical romance, and the competing Enlightenment and Romantic discourses that play off one another in the genre. Alan responding to Darsie, cautions him early on: "View things as they are, and not as they seem to be magnified through thy teeming fancy" (13), concluding the letter with a friendly plea, "Keep guard, therefore, on your imagination, my dear Darsie" (14).

Given that *Redgauntlet* imagines a third Jacobite rising, this caution against too much imagination becomes significant. Since Scott is completely fictionalizing the history in *Redgauntlet*, he has all the freedom to imagine the outcome of this third rebellion. There are no historical facts to keep his imagination in check, and he could with ease write out the victory of the Jacobites and effectively revise history and offer a radical counterhistory. He has the free will to forget the past. But Alan warns Darsie to keep guard on his imagination, and this becomes a warning by Scott to Scott himself, a Lukácsian reflection on his reflection. This distortion of the imagination also functions as a palimpsest as the text simultaneously writes and overwrites the imaginative history. Destiny, the historically determined present, restricts the possibility of choosing to forget. The text moves towards the third Jacobite rising, the text inscribes this possibility, and at the moment of its origin, it defaces it. The trace of the possibility remains, however.

Scott sympathizes with the living memories carried by the remaining Jacobite culture, but as Alan warns Darsie, he needs to see "things as they are." By 1824, when *Redgauntlet* was published, Jacobite sentiments have been tempered. In the Preface to *Redgauntlet's* 1828 edition within the Magnum Opus, Scott explains the driving force behind not only the story of the fictitious *Redgauntlet* and rising of 1765, but also his earlier Jacobite histories:

> The Jacobite enthusiasm of the 18th century, particularly during the rebellion of 1745, afforded a theme, perhaps the finest that could be selected for fictitious composition, founded upon real or probable incident. This civil war, and its remarkable events, were remembered by the existing generation without any degree of bitterness of spirit which seldom fails to attend internal dissension. The Highlanders, who formed the principle strength of Charles Edward's army, were an ancient and high-spirited race, peculiar in their habits of war and peace, brave to romance, and exhibiting a character turning upon points more adapted to poetry than to the prose of real life. (205)

Here is a "remarkable," real or probable event and an "ancient and high-spirited race" that is more suited to poetry. Scott aestheticizes the historical event by removing it from the "prose of real life" to the realm of the imagination and fiction. A particular event can become too much for reality to handle and must be exiled into the realm of poetry. Scott reflects on the competing attitudes towards the past, the desire to romanticize or aestheticize the past, to make poetry out of the "prose of real life" and the need to rationalize, remaining objective towards the past.

The preface ends on a nostalgic note that calls on readers to remember and respect the past because the past can give back what is lost:

> Those who remember such old men will probably agree that the progress of time, which has withdrawn all of them from the field, has removed, at the same time, a peculiar and striking feature of ancient manners. Their love of past times, their tales of bloody battles fought against romantic odds, were all dear to the imagination, and their little idolatry of locks of hair, pictures, rings, ribbons, and other memorials of the time in which they still seemed to live, was an interesting enthusiasm. (214)

And yet, these "innocuous and respectable grandsires" with their "little idolatry of locks of hair" and other trinkets could come in the guise of one Doctor Archibald Cameron, whose history Scott traces in the preface that seemingly wants to dispel any remaining Jacobite reality. Scott tells us that Dr. Cameron, brother of the "celebrated Donald Cameron of Lochiel, attainted for the rebellion of 1745, was found by a party of soldiers lurking with a comrade in the wilds of Loch Katrine, five or six years after the battle of Culloden" (207). The past of 1745 was still alive and active in 1750 when this incident occurred. Dr. Cameron was captured and later executed by the order of George II. Scott explains that Dr. Cameron never bore arms in the rebellion, but used his medical skill "for the service, indifferently, of the wounded of both parties" (208). In addition, Dr. Cameron's return to Scotland was "ascribed exclusively to family affairs" (208). When he was arrested, Dr. Cameron's wife, Scott tells us, "threw herself, on three different occasions before George II. and the members of his family" but was "rudely repulsed from their presence, and at length placed, it was said, in the same prison with her husband, and confined with unmanly severity" (208). The execution of Dr. Cameron, Scott writes, "remains in popular estimation a dark blot upon the memory of George II" (208).

However, there is a *but* in this heart-wrenching story that Scott so carefully articulates. He enflames the reader's imagination, opens the reader to the romantic past of the 1745 rebellion, to the self-sacrificing Dr. Cameron only to tear down the historical aesthetic he has drawn: "Yet the fact was, that whether the execution of Archibald Cameron was political or otherwise, it might certainly have been justified" (208). Scott explains that Dr. Cameron's visit was not entirely due to "family matters" but he was commissioned to "hold intercourse with the well-known M'Pherson of Cluny, chief of the clan Vourich, whom the Chevalier had left behind at his departure from Scotland in 1746, and who remained during ten years of proscription and danger, skulking from place to place in the Highlands, and maintaining an uninterrupted correspondence between Charles and his friends" (208). What Scott manages to do in the space of one page is not only to point to the fact that the past as remote or dormant as it may seem is never quite so, but also that an event — in this case the circumstances leading to the execution of Dr. Cameron — may have more than one interpretation. In the living memory of the people, the execution was a "blot upon the memory of George II," an execution of revenge and sheer display of power. In the memory of government records, it was a "justifiable" act based on reasons the government chose to keep concealed "lest by divulging them they had indicated the channel of communication which, it is now well known, they possessed to all the plots of Charles Edward" (209).

In De Quincey's anecdote, the Border is inscribed on Scott's face. Like the wax upon which memories are impressed, Scott's face or, more to my purpose, Scott's texts, inscribe the Border and its turbulent history. There is a face, however, in *Redgauntlet* upon whose features the past is fantastically impressed. For a novel that spends ample time ridiculing romantic

sensations and flights of fancy through the voice of Alan Fairford, it invests, somewhat suspiciously, too much into weaving a family history of quite mythic proportions. The Redgauntlet family is cursed, and the curse has a material presence in the shape of a horse-shoe inscribed on the forehead of its male members. The critical eye cannot remain blind to Scott's apparent playfulness with gothic romance plot conventions, and in this way *Redgauntlet* overwrites the original romance novels. He parodies the curse and tortures his own character in prolonging his attempt to find out his true identity well past the point of the reader's awareness of Darsie's origin. However, there is always a serious side to Scott, and a moral about the past's persistence in the present lies buried in the tale of the curse that speaks of a past, which must but never can be forgotten and haunts the pages of the novel.

Chapter III: Hogg's Historical Bodies: Persistent Pasts and Reluctant Corpses

In his historical narratives, Scott tiptoed around the Benjaminian ideal of brushing history against the grain. He cleaned up Bradwardine's estate but reminded us of the violent changes. He imagined a third Jacobite rising, raising up a fictional past only to tear it down before it could be fully imagined. He allowed for the decaying memories to be refurbished by Old Mortality's chisel. In Scott, the relationship between essence and contingency on the historical palimpsest is one of marked tension as he tries to negotiate between an ideal and nostalgic underwriting and an empirical forward-looking overwriting.

Like the past that persists, Scott and his historical imagination lingers over James Hogg. In *Familiar Anecdotes of Scott* (1832), Hogg recalls a day when he came to Scott asking him why he did not yet again review his work, to which Scott answers with measure: "'I felt that we were so much of the same school that if I had said of you as I wished to say I would have been thought by the world to be applauding myself" (118). It is no wonder that this remark leaves the young writer unsatisfied, and Hogg defiantly retorts: "Dear Sir Walter ye can never suppose I belang to your school o' chivalry? Ye are the king o' that school but I'm the king o' the mountain an' fairy school which is far higher ane nor yours" (118). But what does it mean to be the "king o' the mountain an' fairy school"? What does it mean for this school to be higher than Scott's? Scott simply dismisses Hogg: "'the higher the attempt to ascend the greater might be the fall'" (119).

One way to understand Hogg's reign over the mountain and fairy school is to consider his background.[27] Born to a family of Border shepherds and tenant farmers, Hogg's modest background was, at least, an obstacle during his career and later reception as a writer. Formally educated at the local parish school for a total of six months, Hogg continued educating himself, furthering his reading and writing skills "by comparing ballads and psalms he had by heart with the printed characters in chap-books and his Bible, and imitating the shapes of the letters by copying what he saw onto an old slate" (Hughes 11). A shepherd from the region of Ettrick in the Scotland Borders, Hogg created a self-educated, sheep herding literary persona which did not conform to the idea of the man of letters and more specifically the Edinburgh literati of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries. For our own historical moment, the emergence of Hogg on the plane of scholarship has, as Andrew Monnickendam notes, "put to question the canon or canonization of a tradition dominated by gentility, the literati, of the last two centuries" (55). The Ettrick Shepherd defies the conventional image of the gentleman writer, and not only does he enter onto the Edinburgh literary scene from the margins of class, he also comes from a geographical periphery — the Border. Being a native of the Border, Hogg had access to the local lore of the "mountain and fairy school." The fantastical events that often occur in his tales invite readers into an archaic world, offering a different way of knowing and ascertaining what has happened than the Enlightenment historical discourse. The use of fantastical elements in stories grounded in particular historical events invites what Hayden White reminds us of: that the historical narrative does not have the function to "dispel false beliefs about the past, human life, the nature of community;" rather, "what it does is test the capacity of a culture's fictions to

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[27] For an excellent discussion of Hogg's life see Gillian Hughes' biography *James Hogg: A Life.* For an electrifying reading of James Hogg's life, see Karl Miller's *The Electric Shepherd*. Miller offers a pithy description of Hogg as a "man of feeling who used to bite the balls of sheep."

endow real events with the kinds of meaning that literature displays to consciousness through its fashioning of patterns of 'imaginary' events" (*CF* 45). Hogg's communal anecdotes put real events to such a test. Hogg's anecdotal, traditionary, histories could be seen as a form of Romantic historiography, though one which, as we will see, is quite different from Scott's ambivalent version. What Hogg attempts to do is juxtapose multiple, distinct communal memories of the past, pasts embedded in both folkloric myths with fantastic elements and official or enlightened histories, eschewing the fantastic for rationalist and empiricist histories. His narratives strip off official ideologies and unveil the human face impressed upon the plane of historical discourse. By emphasizing local and oral storytelling and its role in representing the past, Hogg foregrounds the function of narrativity in historical discourse.

Writing, much like Scott, from the Scottish / English border, Hogg offers a tumultuous outsider / insider perspective on the Union, national narratives, and the historical fiction of national identity itself. Like Thomas Carlyle, Walter Scott and George Eliot, Hogg makes extensive use of fictional editors, proems, and intrusive narrators, but he is more radical than the others in interrupting a strict linear and causal form of narrative in favor of one that calls attention to different ways of knowing and the acceptance of multiple, competing, and overlapping communal pasts. What Hogg illuminates is the impossibility of a single communal past: there are pasts. Such an attitude is necessarily connected to the question of identity that Hogg's work embeds in complex editorial voices. According to Mark L. Schoenfield, "in contrast to the contemporaries who have emerged as the dominant romantic voices [Wordsworth and Byron], Hogg acknowledged the self as a function of professional contingencies and accidents" (208). The split self, in this case manifested as two literary personas — James Hogg

and the Ettrick Shepherd — serves as the foundation to much of Hogg's work. His narratives are often genre hybrids, abounding with split identities, doubles, multiple narrators, and split plots. Similarly, Hogg's historical vision is fragmentary, breaking off into enlightened historical discourse and romantic historiography. Hogg's identity as James Hogg on one end and the Ettrick Shepherd on another fluctuates in textual instability, a point finely alluded to in the desperate proposition of one his most famous characters, Robert Wringhim from *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824): "I was a being incomprehensible to myself" (125).

The instability in identity immediately raises another question: if we cannot talk about a coherent self, how can we talk about a coherent national identity? According to Kenneth Simpson, eighteenth-century Scottish writers were "particularly prone to adapt personae and project self-images," suggesting "a crisis of Scottish identity in the century after the Union" (ix). Schoenfield suggests that this crisis is amplified in the early nineteenth-century when Edinburgh establishes itself as the center of British, European, culture and trade through the emergence of *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Edinburgh Review* (210). While the magazines presented themselves as "distinctly Scottish" they "expanded the Scottish empiricist tradition — spearheaded in the previous century by David Hume, Thomas Reid, and Adam Smith — into a general theory of British nationalism" (210). However, Hogg's emphasis on native Scots mountains and fairies undermines that assured sense of "Britishness."

The formal procedure Hogg adopts of inventing an intricate editorial apparatus, as well as the doubling that occurs in narratives, mimic the palimpsest in that various versions of narratives or selves overwrite one another. The palimpsestuous relation between history and fiction mocks

both the epistemological and material crisis at the heart of the Enlightenment project symbolized by the Union *and* the more romantic notions of coherent and persistent communal memories. The same could be said of the subject (both personal and communal) caught in the relation between the historical, referential event and its retelling. Hogg foregrounds the impenetrability of the past, its essential chaos, ultimately questioning the ability to access a past through textual means. According to Ian Duncan, for Hogg "truth and history are grounded in local custom — in the stories, proverbs and anecdotes a community tells about itself, with which it constitutes its collective memory and generates itself through time" (*SS* 188). In addition, Hogg's tales grounded in a particular region are "articulated across a spacial cluster (rather than series) of narrative occasions, which fail or refuse to cohere into the grand dialectical project of the historical novel and its trajectory of a synthetic literary subject" (Duncan 188). Unlike Scott, Hogg is not worried by this essential chaos written and overwritten in communal memory. He celebrates the historical palimpsest, recognizing history as a form of storytelling in which different versions of the past play off one another. Hogg's mountain and fairy school, then, has to do with tradition and stories told and retold within a community, stories generated through competing oral narrative accounts.

1. "What can this work be?"

The palimpsest structure is most obvious in Hogg's most celebrated work, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Because the *Confessions* masterfully pit against one another two widely opposing discourses that attempt to explain past events, the text offers a subtle yet significant commentary on the writing of the past, or history. While history

and authoritative sources in the hands of the Editor criticize tradition, tradition turns to criticize history. Its very structure — a memoir embedded between two attempts by the editor to retell the events in the memoir — immediately suggests a palimpsest. But the palimpsest structure goes beyond the formal features as there is a complex interplay between the Enlightened Editor's interpretation and commentary of the confessions, Robert Wringhim's own memoir that destabilizes reason, and as Crawford Gribben perceptively notes, the authorial voice "that comments ironically" on both the Editor's Enlightenment commentary and Wringhim's memoir (18).

We end up with a palimpsestuous relation among competing commentaries that finally result in confusion and inconclusiveness. As Gribben suggests, the fact that Hogg tells the story twice — from the Editor's perspective and from Wringhim's — forces us to consider not just the content of the story and the differences in interpretation but also the "manner in which they are presented" (18). The rationalist, Enlightenment discourse the Editor employs is different than Wringhim's Calvinist discourse, and the novel as such puts both discourses to question because ultimately Robert does not have any self-knowledge and the Editor does not quite understand what he is reading: "no person, man or woman, will ever peruse [the memoir] with the same attention that I have done, and yet I confess that I do not comprehend the writer's drift" (174). He fails, as David Groves suggests, in reading the double meanings that are at constant play (123). Thus the two narrators are caught up in their own discourse practices; both are "victims of the closed systems of discourse they blindly impose on reality" (Groves 123). For the Editor, Robert Wringhim is either "the greatest fool" and "greatest wretch, on whom was ever stamped the form of humanity" or a "religious maniac," deluded to the "height of madness" (175). But

both of these conclusions seem unsatisfactory. Hogg's narrative, as Douglas Mack suggests in his "Revisiting *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,*" "seeks to confront the insights and the limitations of both the Enlightenment Edinburgh and the pre-Enlightenment Ettrick," confronting "the demonic and the forces of madness" but "not allow[ing] the mystery and the terror of these forces to be diminished and evaded by means of lucid and rational explanation of the kind offered by the Editor" (23). The Editor's Enlightenment narrative and Robert's narrative emerging from a pre-Enlightenment culture constantly and persistently pose to each other questions that remain unanswered.

Like the corpse that decays at the end of the novel so do the two dominant ideological discourses. The Editor's rationalist discourse ultimately unravels. For Ian Campbell, this intention is responsible for two of the novel's "greatest achievements" (191). The novel's plot based on the supernatural is directed to an audience "who may not accept the idea of the existence of the supernatural," and it retrieves the struggle between good and evil from "doctrinal or specific struggle to something sufficiently undefined, yet sufficiently credible in any age" (192). The perceptive reader — a more careful reader than the Editor — will mark Hogg's ability to "break the link between 'good' language and 'good' people" by repositioning conventional religious positions into the mouth of the devil" (Campbell 177). But finally, the narrative if it convinces us of anything convinces us that "madness, evil, possession are not the exclusive province of Satan" (Campbell 192). *The Confessions* collapse all normative ground and resist any attempt at criticism, inquiry and understanding, disturbingly leaving the reader and the work itself in much the same state as the writer of the *Confessions* and its most famous corpse— decentered and dismantled, respectively.

The first Editor's narrative is built on multiple sources that by Enlightenment's default claim "truth" — judiciary records, parish registers, "history." Even when the Editor consults tradition, he never tells us how he acquires the information. The individual voice seems to be insignificant. As Ismael Velasco points out, "we must, in the name of 'history, take his word as a true representation or rather re-creation of what was narrated to him" (43). At one point, the Editor disregards the narrative of "one who knew all the circumstances" because his narrative significantly differs from other accounts of the story, and consequently the Editor "judged expedient to give the account as thus *publicly* handed down to us" (34; emphasis added). This public that hands down to us the narrative, however, is faceless. Because we first read a filtered, linear account of the events of Robert's life it is all the more striking to finally face the actual memoir, the face and voice intimately involved with the narrative that the Editor has just told. Yet the Editor does include the memoir, and in the face of this direct link with a voice from the past, he is at a loss because the voice speaks in opposition to historical record.

At the end of the *Confessions,* Hogg's editorial persona exclaims "What can this work be?" (165). The rationalizing apparatus of the Editor recoils and is unable to comprehend the journal fully. What indeed can Robert Wringhim's memoir be, and, even more to the point, what can Hogg's work be? What does one make of this confession? What does one make of the editorial narratives which frame it? Hogg's contemporary critics made much and yet nothing of it. In 1824, an anonymous critic writing for the *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* condemned the book as "singularly dull and revolting," an "extraordinary trash" (300), while a reviewer for the *British Critic* labeled the work as "uncouth and unpleasant" (303). While Hogg tried his hand at a Scott-like evasion of authorship, the critics were quickly onto

him. “Write what he will,” writes the *British Critic* reviewer, “there is a diseased and itching peculiarity of style ... which under every disguise, is always sure to betray Mr. Hogg” (303).

This “uncouth and unpleasant” text inscribed in “diseased and itching” style provoked hostility in Hogg’s contemporary readers. Campbell argues that the “early hostility to the novels was generated by a failure to see the satiric dimension which laughed at extremism and human perversion of religious doctrine” (177). The qualification of Hogg’s work as “uncouth and unpleasant” stems also from a class bias. As Karl Miller notes, “it used to matter that Scott was a gentleman and the Ettrick Shepherd was not” (113). Certainly, it must have been a very diseased notion that a shepherd could dare write a novel. However harsh and unfair criticism of Hogg’s work has been during his lifetime, the critics that have done most harm were to come later in the century. David Groves finely sums up the Victorian butchering of Hogg’s work: “his reputation received the kiss of death from Victorian editors” (156). Hogg’s Victorian editors preserved his less imaginative and daring poetry in the 1838, 1852, and 1865 editions of Hogg’s poetry, so that according to Groves if we would read these collections, we are “likely to conclude that James Hogg was a respectable, harmless (in other words, brainless) innocent” (156). His prose work received the same treatment in “equally horrible editions” of 1837, 1865, and 1884, in which the “Shepherd was ‘improved’ by being placed in a Victorian straight-jacket of unimaginative respectability which ensured that he would be forgotten during most of the twentieth-century” (Groves 156). The Shepherd is sheared and cleaned for the respectable and urban literary marketplace.

The work’s reception history and its subsequent editions consistently enact the palimpsestic form and require a palimpsestuous reading of the text. The repugnance with the

Confessions, for example, led to its 1837 re-issue in a greatly mutilated form and under a new title — *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Fanatic* — so that Victorian readers encountered an airbrushed *Confessions.* In the introduction to the 2002 Edinburgh University Press edition of the novel, Peter Garside maps out a careful analysis of the substantive alterations that occur between the 1824 and 1837 editions, noting 680 variants having to do with "grammatical and stylistic 'improvement'" to the removal of theological content and structural changes (lxxv-xxvi). The most intrusive structural changes occur in the second editorial narrative, where changes are made to the sections dealing with the suicide and exhumation of the body as well as the removal of all references to Hogg (Garside lxxvi-xxvii). Parallel to Hogg's depiction of the desecration of the grave and body in the concluding scenes of the *Confessions,* the Victorian editors have desecrated and violated Hogg's text, as well as Hogg's authorial body, in an attempt to domesticate the text and infuse it with coherence. The mutilations in the edited text overwrote Hogg's unique imaginative power and helped in delimiting Hogg as a minor writer during the later nineteenth-century.

Hogg's Victorian editors removed not only the most contentious aspects of the work's theology, but also the element most crucial to Hogg's decentering practice and historical imagination: play. The notorious grave robbing scene at the end of the *Confessions* is often brilliantly read as Hogg's way to portray the harsh reviews and the butchering the reviewers and printers have done to his work.[28] Much like the very grave and corpse Hogg describes, the passages yield plenty of material with which the critic can play. Its most striking and playful

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[28] See Mark L. Schoenfield's "Butchering James Hogg: Romantic Identity in the Literary Marketplace" in Mary A. Favret and Nicola J. Watson's *At the Limits of Romanticism.* According to Schoenfield, the literary marketplace was a place of "contention in which the self was revealed as a social construction, a mediation between personal agency and institutional power" (220).

detail is Hogg himself, who writes himself into the pages of his own work. While the scene concludes the Editor's narrative and by extension the novel as a whole, it is also the point of origin of the novel. It is in the grave that the Editor will come across Wringhim's memoir. The corpse is the master referent, acting as the center of both the structure of the traditionary tale based on local memory and the empirically driven Enlightenment discourse. However, as a point of origin, it is unstable since the corpse, so wonderfully preserved, we are told, will start to decompose as the narrative moves towards the end. To make sense of Robert Wringhim's memoir, the Editor, in a wonderful play of self-reflexivity, inserts an extract "from an authentic letter," written by James Hogg, appearing in *Blackwood's Magazine* in August of 1823. The letter indeed appeared in *Blackwood's* under the title of "A Scots Mummy," and it recounts a local story of a young man, of unknown origin, who has committed suicide.[29] The fact that the boy in the traditionary tale is of unknown origin is crucial since the *Confessions* play with the idea of a coherent self. The boy's origin is further made even more obscure by the confusion concerning the bonnet found in the grave. In "A Scot's Mummy," Hogg tells us that it was "broad blue bonnet," (168), but according to the Editor, who has the bonnet in his possession, the bonnet is not broad nor is it a "Border bonnet," as would be expected I imagine on the head of Border shepherd; rather "it seems to have been a Highland bonnet" (173). This confounds our enlightened Editor since the bonnet "is not conformable with the rest of the dress" (173) — empirical evidence does not cohere. One of the most singular aspects of the Editor's second narrative is that it remains silent over the relation between the boy of "A Scots Mummy" and Robert Wringhim. Clearly, we are not meant to assume that they are one and the same, but a

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[29] The entire text of the "Scott's Mummy" is included in the recent compilation of essays written by James Hogg, *Contributions to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine Volume 1, 1817-1828*. Ed. Thomas C. Richardson.

question remains. Ironically, the rational Editor never questions how Robert's memoir finds its way to the boy.

In "A Scots Mummy," the boy, Hogg tells us, was in the service of Mr. Anderson of Eltrive, a local farmer, and the day following his suicide, Anderson's servants found the boy's body and buried him, according to tradition of burying suicides on the boundaries of different proprietors, "at the very point where the Duke of Buccleuch's land, the Laird of Drummelzier's, and Lord Napier's, meet" (167). "Thus far went tradition," writes Hogg, "and no one ever disputed one jot of the disgusting oral tale" (167). But in the Editor's narrative, Hogg will ironically proceed to correct this point of the traditionary tale in a most playful manner, by placing himself face to face with the Editor. The Editor and his cronies come across Hogg and ask him for directions to the grave site. Later, stopping at a shepherd's cot "to get a drink of milk," the Editor reads Hogg's directions to the shepherd, who informs him that "there was hardly a bit o't correct" for the grave was in a completely opposite direction (170). The Editor learns from the shepherd that the body is not buried at the crossroads of the three lands but on top of hill called Faw-Law. For the shepherd, this is a "singular blunder" as it does not accord with the tradition of burying suicides at boundary lines. A singular blunder or not, this center lies outside of tradition. In addition, the shepherd wonders "how the poet could be mistaken there, who once herded the very ground where the grave is" (170-71). Poking fun at his own pretensions to knowledge, Hogg destabilizes both traditionary history and empirical investigation.

Nowhere do both discourses fail more spectacularly then when he investigates the body. In "A Scots Mummy" extract, we are told that two young men got "into their heads to open this

grave in the wilderness, and see if there were any of the bones of the suicide of former ages and centuries remaining" (168). The reason for the boys' opening the grave stands in contrast to the later Editor's desire to peer into the grave. The boys just want to "see" if any remains of "former ages" — there is no desire, as in the Editor's expedition, to understand the man in the grave, his story, and the past which evolved from his story. In other words, there is no search for meaning. They open the grave, and seeing the rope by which the boy hanged himself, one of the men starts pulling at it: "so he pulled and pulled at it, till behold the body came up into a sitting posture, with a broad blue bonnet on its head, and its plaid around it, all as fresh as that day it was laid in! I never heard of a preservation so wonderful" (168). Here, Hogg makes a point to emphasize that he has not been to see the corpse himself. By doing so, Hogg stresses his story's reliance on tradition and orality. However, we are also told that the men cut parts of the corpse's hair and portions of his clothes, "which were all quite fresh, and distributed them among their acquaintances, sending a portion to me, among the rest, to keep as natural curiosities" (168). These material remains are of course supposed to add to the tale's credibility, and Hogg states that along with letter, he submits "a piece of his plaid, and another of his waistcoat breast" (168), remnants that were sent to him.

To the skeptical, enlightened Editor, apparently hearing about material remains from the expositor of the mountain and fairy school is not enough. The corpse is tangible and well preserved, and invites the Editor to commence his own expedition despite his reservations concerning the tale's authenticity: "It bears the stamp of authenticity in every line; yet so often had I been hoaxed by the ingenious fancies displayed in that Magazine, that when this relation met my eye, I did not believe it; but from the moment that I perused it, I half formed the

resolution of investigating these wonderful remains personally" (169). The narrative of the Editor's ransacking the grave is told through a register of materialism, yet the archeological and even phrenological, empirically driven investigation, proves very little. The Editor is extremely disappointed that the "head was wanting" this time around (172). He does manage to locate the skull, "but it was not complete. A spade has damaged it, and one of the temple quarters was wanting" (172). While the Editor professes to "be no phrenologist," calling up one of the emerging sciences of the period, he thinks "the skull of the wretched man no study" (173). The Editor proceeds to minutely catalogue the material remains: "the breeches still suited the thighs, the stocking the leg, and the garters were were wrapt as neatly and as firm below the knee as if they had been newly tied" (172). The shoes were in a state of decay excepting the soles that "were all as fresh as any of those we wore" (172). The shoes, however, call the Editor's full attention and ironically demonstrate his deductive reasoning: "I could not help remarking, that in the inside of one of the shoes there was a layer of cow's dung, about one eighth of an inch thick, and in the hollow of the sole fully one fourth of an inch. It was firm, green, and fresh; and proved that he had been working in a byre" (172). The only empirical evidence "proving" anything happens to be cow's dung, which does not say much about empiricism.

By the end of the perverted archeological dig, the "limbs, from the loins to the toes" while being in state of perfection, "could not bear handling," and before the Editor and his crew could return the body back into the grave, "they were all shaken to pieces" (173). The Editor who is so careful in editing the manuscript outside of the memoir's text — having embedded the manuscript in between his editorial commentaries — always taking care to remain true to the source, to objectively negotiate between "history, judiciary records, and tradition," is partially

responsible for having the material remains finally disintegrate (64). Not only is the corpse — the center — displaced but it is literally decentered: "shaken to pieces." The body is shaken to pieces "except the thighs, which continued to retain a kind of flabby form" (173). The peripheries of the center persist, but they persist in a flaccid manner. The decentering of the center is unsettling because it takes away the promise of a referential truth, violating the center of the entire empirical structure. How can one who is so careful not to violate "history, judiciary records, and tradition," desecrate a grave and violate a corpse? At the moment when the body falls apart, the Editor finds the "printed pamphlet" — a textual past — which turns out the be Robert Wringhim's journal, which we have just concluded reading, and in a circular motion, Hogg ends where the novel starts. The master referent has decomposed into nothingness, leaving behind the flabby thighs and a textual remnant — a composition which no one can hope to fully interpret. Robert's memoir stands outside of "history, judiciary records, and tradition." The memoir itself does not form the structure of history, judiciary records and tradition since it comes after these. The Editor finds the manuscript well after the formation of all three registers of experience, which now, so to say, become the flabby thighs. But the memoir, like the corpse, also precedes these by at once being the Editor's narrative's origin and end. The Editor possess the manuscript which offers itself as an "original document of a most singular nature" (64), but which the Editor confesses not to understand: "with regard to the work itself, I dare not venture a judgment, for I do not understand it" (174). "The Scott's Mummy" is overwritten by the Editor's account of the grave digging scene, and the corpse which is the master referent has been displaced by a text, which is constantly disrupted because it's meaning resists interpretation and comprehension.

The decomposition of this body, the past's referent, uncomfortably points to the instability of the past's material remains and any organic unity between the past and present. The body's decomposition signifies the instability of the relation between the past and present. It is not an organic, coherent relation. The present is not diachronically related to the past. When the young men in "The Scot's Mummy" energetically pulled the rope, the corpse rose, its materiality emerging into the present moment. But the referential past, it seems, can only be invoked so far before it decays. The body's decomposition signifies something even more troubling. In his expert reading of the grave robbing scene, Ian Duncan acutely suggests, "'organic unity', the age's most powerful principle of a transhistorical developmental continuity, is prefigured in the slime of decomposition" ("The Upright Corpse" 48). If the individual body decays so can the national body. Just like Robert's memoir that abruptly ends, and the editorial narratives that are founded on incomprehensibility of that which they edit, so too does the fiction of the nation.

Specifically, exposing the illusion of coherence and incoherence or decay reveals Scottish identity and puts to question national identity. For scholars like Ian Duncan, Leith Davis, and Janet Sorensen, Scotland needs to be revisited not as a "Romantic object or commodity" but as the site of Scottish Romanticism that relies on an intricate relationship between the Scottish Enlightenment and Romantic movements (1-4).[30] In other words, the particularity or singularity of Scottish Romanticism is its palimpsestuous play of two distinct discourses. According to Duncan, Scottish history "casts modernity as a succession of disjunctions and dismemberments (the Reformations, the Acts of Union)," while the Romantic ideology of national culture

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[30] For Duncan, the Scottish Romanticism is an "artefact" and outcome of the political conflict between *The Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's* (Duncan, Davis, Sorensen 4). For more on this relation, see Ian Duncan's "Edinburgh, Capital of the Nineteenth-Century" in *Romantic Metropolis: Cultural Production of the City.* James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin, eds. For more in depth exposition, see also Duncan's *Scott's Shadow.*

"promises the eternal reoccurrence of spiritual unity that wipes out the division between past and present [. . .] even in its reiteration of the figures of historical loss" (*Scott's Shadow* 186). Duncan reads this Romantic ideology in terms of psychoanalysis and the Freudian uncanny by marking that "spectral persistence of ancient forms beyond the cessation of their social life unsettles the linear, evolutionary unfolding" of progressive historical narratives (*SS* 186). For Duncan, the uncanny is "the subjective figure of a violent discontinuity" during times of historical transitioning (186). At the same time, the uncanny is "an intensified effect" of the progressive unfolding since "evolutionary development abolishes an absolute distinction between past and present" (186). Duncan's reading of Scottish romanticism in terms of the uncanny enables him to retrieve Scotland from the grasp of English or European Romanticism that has made Scotland the topos "of a a popular and organic national culture" (187) and reread Scotland as a space where national culture was recognized as a "historical problem rather than a solution — an ascendant, potent, disputed, and unstable ideological formation" (187). While Duncan's psychoanalytic reading works well here, I want to read the "ancient forms" and the persistent past, together with its specters or Duncan's "upright corpses," through discourse analysis focused on the figure of the palimpsest.

The "unstable ideological formation" of a national culture, a national identity bodied forth through historical narrative, and the discourse of history itself, as well as the dead or nearly dead bodies that inhabit the past and present, converge in Hogg's historical imagination. The trope of the corpse — the corpse that is anything but a corpse — with its refusal to remain still or fully decay becomes emblematic of Hogg's historical ideology — the persistent pasts that haunt the present. In extension, the corpse symbolizing a nation that is dying out at a tumultuous

historical point of transition while not decaying marks at once the insistence of the idea of nation as dictated by Romantic nationalism and the very fabrication of such categories. Thus the discourse of national identity is written and overwritten.

The Scots Mummy is only of one of the reluctant corpses in Hogg's fictions, suggesting that his playful use of the trope is not "singular" but something of an obsession. His spectacular *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823) is haunted by a ghastly reluctant corpse. The novel is one of Hogg's most ambitious works, but after its appearance in the 1820s it remained out of print until 1995. A year before Hogg dug up the remains of narrative and dismembered both empiricist *and* religious discourse in the *Confessions*, he unraveled the thread of history in *The Three Perils of Woman.* The text is not a historical novel in the strictest sense of the word. However, it shares a concern with the historical context and the individual caught up in a moment of a tumultuous historical transition. Hogg's use of conventional devices employed both by the national tale and historical romance suggests an intent to dig up the skeleton of the historical narrative and subvert the enlightened notion of progressive, diachronic development. The most obvious way Hogg disrupts historical linearity is by subverting the chronological order of the perils. Unlike a traditional historical novel that traces a strict, forward oriented linear movement, Hogg's narrative moves backwards. In this way, the perils can be read as palimpsestic accounts of the past and demonstrate the past's disrupting persistence in the present, complicating any notion of historical linearity and organic unity. Peril First is set during Hogg's own day in the Scottish Borders and Edinburgh, while Perils Second and Third are set in the Highlands during the immediate aftermath of the Battle at Culloden in 1746.

In Peril First, we meet the beautiful lowlander Agatha Bell who marries Dirmaid M'Ion, a highlander while Perils Second and Third follow the life of a lowlander and servant girl, Sally, who, like Agatha, also marries a highlander. Such marital unions were a favorite device of national tales and Scott's historical romances, allegorizing the Act of Union and imagining the "constitution of a new national identity" (Barrell 130). Significantly, in Hogg's novel, the allegorical unions do not take place at the end of the narratives. Agatha and M'Ion marry roughly midway through Peril First, and shortly after the union, Agatha becomes a "ghastly automaton" and a grotesque reluctant corpse. Sally marries her lover at the end of Peril Second, but then in Peril Third we find her searching for her husband, believing he has died in the battle of Culloden. Both Sally and her husband die before Hogg concludes telling the final story. According to John Barrell, Sally's tragic end "seems to reopen the wounds which [Agatha's] tale has closed, as if questioning the optimism of the national tale" (131). Thus, underneath Agatha's contemporary story, we are faced with the underwriting of 1746 and Sally's tragic end. Whether the final peril puts to question the optimism of Agatha's narrative is a larger question, but significantly Hogg opens up the question of historical erasure and preservation. Seemingly, we can have both: an acknowledgement of the 1746 devastations and the "general carnage of Culloden" (*TPW* 361) and the progress of 1820.

The narrator in Peril Two speaks of events befalling the Higlands in 1746 that "were fairly hushed up, there being no reason afterwards that dared to publish or avow them" (332). But the narrator sees no "reason why these should die. For my part I like to rake them up" (332). He appeals here to the "truth of history," extending transcendental power to the unwritten or unspoken historical record. This is a simple fact: we may hush events up, but not writing about

them does not make them any less real. Hogg's critics have noted that his turn here to Culloden is an attempt to rewrite Scott's romantic version of the battle in *Waverley.* According to John Barrell, it does even more in commenting on the anxieties of raking up painful historical details (135). Barrell reads Hogg's Davie Duff, employed by the Duke of Cumberland to bury the corpses of those killed at Culloden, as a direct opposition to Scott's Old Mortality, whose job is to avert back to the graves the eyes of history (135). Yet his desire to rake up events others would rather remain silent over is suspended in the following chapter where he desists "both from want of room and want of inclination to the task" to describe "dreadful scenes" of the Culloden battle: "As they are the disgrace of the British annals, it is perhaps as well that I am obliged to pass over them" (*TPW* 357). Hogg both rakes up and buries throughout Sally's narrative. While Davie Duff's job is to conceal the dead bodies, the traces and the desire to rake them up remain: "I once went out five miles out of my road to visit their graves [. . .] When I was there it appeared a little hollowed, as though some one had been digging in it" (406). When read in conjunction with the final scenes of the *Confessions*, this statement points to the importance of the grave digging topos that appears in Hogg's texts: the need to reveal the past and the anxiety associated with letting memory speak. Hogg's own backward chronology reveals how the present underwrites the past, and I will now proceed from Sally's peril to Agatha's peril, the end's beginning.

Just as Hogg played with the corpse in the *Confessions,* he plays to the limits with Agatha's half dead body. Very soon after her marriage, the beautiful Agatha falls into a "hasty dissolution" (198), seemingly dying. The narrator refuses to apply any sort of coherence to what is to follow: "In what state she then was, it will never be in the power of man to decide. The issue turned out so terrible, that the whole matter has always appeared to me as much above human

agency as human capacity" (196). Hogg refuses to master the narrative of the event — readers may decide for themselves, "but farther I take not on me to decide" (197). He opens a space for readers to judge, explaining that "if any can comprehend it from a plain narration of the incidents as they succeeded one another, the definition shall be put in their power" (197). The narrator offers "plain narration" and a linear depiction of events with reservation, alluding to the incomprehensibility of the event itself. Linear narration cannot define what has happened.

According to the narrator, her body at one moment violently "started and shrunk" and at these signs of life, Agatha's father lay prostrate on top of her "and cried to the Almighty to restore her" (199). Hogg intrudes upon this overly pathetic and sentimental scene. He first cautions readers to "bow with humble submission to the awards of the Most High" (199) for Mr. Bell's ejaculations directed to the Almighty are apparently anything but humble. Then he pushes the death bed scene to its most absurd climax: at the moment of Agatha's father's most "vehement and unrestrained supplication, behold the corpse sat up in the bed in one moment!" (199-200). The absurdity of Agatha's body, "the corpse, dressed as it was in its dead-clothes, a most appalling sight as man ever beheld" (200), reveals a serious commentary on personal and communal identity. For Agatha's body is now a "ghastly automaton," continuing to jerk violently and in "a sort of hobbling motion, as if it moved on springs" (200). Two commentaries are embedded in this grotesque image of a puppet-like corpse. Hogg provides an image of both the state of a woman's identity in marriage and the state of a nation in a tumultuous historical transitioning. By marrying, she transitions from an autonomous self into a self inscribed in the husband. Agatha experiences a dissolution of the self, a death in life where now her body and her identity are in the possession of M'Ion and indirectly of her father who

plans to benefit economically from the marriage. The consequences of the marriage allegorize the consequences of the Union for the Scottish identity. According to Mack, Daniel Bell's plan to introduce Border-style sheep farming into the Highlands "would immediately call to mind the appalling" Highland Clearances (427). The Clearances occurred in various places across the Highlands and in various forms. The most notorious and traumatic Clearances, however, took place between 1811 and 1821, "involving the relocation of 6,000-10,000 people to coastal communities where the allocation of land was deliberately insufficient for subsistence, thereby coercing the population into the landlord's labour force." Then the confiscated lands "were turned over to large-scale sheep-farming operations" (Cameron qtd in Mack 428-29). Hogg's intricate play of national assimilation and consumption portrays the union between Agatha and M'Ion from the perspective of Agatha's father, who believes the union will make his daughter a "great Highland lady" (127). Thus, Hogg does not perform a traditional move exemplified in the national tale: this union does not figure a British identity at the expanse of the smaller communal groups. Rather, Hogg depicts this operation in reverse: Agatha's lowland and Border identity is translated into her father's wishful imagining of a "great Highland lady." The smaller communal identity prevails at least in the imagination. Eerily it wants to prevail in the imagination of Daniel Bell who is partially responsible for erasing it. Daniel Bell will consume in all manners of the word, M'Ion's property, so that Hogg in effect shows us the multi-layered nation and its factions, all overlapping one another in equal measure, consuming and assuming a broad national identity. He depicts a nation in a state of fragmenting and confusing transition into various visions of the nation, where any notion of an organic unity is revealed as fiction.

By analogy, then, Agatha' s comatose, liminal state between life and death corresponds to the state of a nation not fully formed and in political and economic transition. Hogg further maps the transitioning nation onto Agatha's face, a "face of death still; but that is not all. The most extraordinary circumstance was, that there was not, in one feature, the slightest resemblance to the same face only a few hours before [. . .]. It was now like the dead countenance of an idiot" (200). It is this idiotic death mask that Hogg will later describe as the "angel face" that "carried comfort and joy with it wherever it has appeared" (224). For Agatha will give birth to a boy during her apparent death-like state and transform into "a blessing to the human race" (224). While it is tempting to read the son as a symbol of the new nation — the healthy baby boy born from a mother in a comatose state — Hogg is not interested in the child as much as in Agatha's resurrection. It is important to note that her angel face is neither the face of the Scottish or English, nor British identity. The face transcends national identity. But the ending of Agatha Bell's story parodies the conventional endings of the period's novels: she not only had a comfort carrying angel face, but she "has been eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, the instructress of young persons in the ways of truth and godliness" (224), and the narrator asks in seeming sincerity whether anyone "can doubt that the Almighty will continue to bless such a benign creature to the end, and her progeny after her?" (224). This sincerity exposes Hogg's ironic stance towards the benign creature's angelic face, recalling back to the reader's mind the "countenance of an idiot," and Hogg's narrator leaves us uncomfortable yet again.

The ending of Agatha's story is so saturated with sentimentality that it can only be considered as an instance of play with the sentimental tradition of the national tale, undermining and transcending its nation-building pretensions. While Agatha's story may be read as a

palimpsestic overwriting of Sally's story, as a burial of the past's painful memory, Hogg's entire narrative ends at the beginning, on the ground of the Culloden battle, raking up Sally's death. To revert to Hogg's much used narratorial interjection in *TPW* —"horrible to narrate!" (407) — Hogg leaves readers with the image of a dead Sally holding her dead baby. The perils rake up and bury national identities and Hogg gestures towards a humanist vision of communal identity, mapped on Agatha's angel face and inscribed on Sally's dead body and the sympathy her death provokes. It is here that Hogg comes close to prefiguring George Eliot's historic imagination focused on a sympathetic and ethical relation between the present and the past.

2. "The evening tale around the fading embers"

Hogg was already practicing how to represent the fragments of the historical body disintegrating in the *Confessions* and *The Perils* in his earlier novel, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818). The most recent edition of Hogg's historical novel, *The Brownie*, is a 1976 publication in which Douglas S. Mack introduces the text by concluding that it is "a rather disjointed book" (xviii). Mack, not unlike Hogg's contemporaries, desires a unified whole. He gives credit to Hogg by speculating that Hogg might have desired this loose construction in order to capture "the atmosphere of what [Hogg] calls 'the evening tale round the fading embers,'" the oral storytelling tradition of the mountain and fairy school. However, the two plots — one centering on Walter Laidlaw's sympathy with the Covenanters, his imprisonment and trial, and the other focusing on his daughter's fantastical and mysterious alliance with the Brownie (a fairy like creature) — according to Mack, create two separate centers of interest and as a result the book is not "entirely successful" (xviii). Thus, not only does the narrative have to have a locus in the

form of centralized narratorial point of view but the reader's interest must also be as coherent. Hogg questions the level of coherence in narratives that seek to represent the past.

In *The Content of Form,* Hayden White stipulates that "what is 'imaginary' about any narrative representation is the illusion of a centered consciousness capable of looking out on the world, apprehending its structure and processes, and representing them to itself as having all of the formal coherency of narrativity itself" (36). Hogg may have anticipated White's and later postmodern historiography's concerns with the possibility of representing a verified past through narrative. These concerns might have moved Hogg to develop a narrative containing two plots. In other words, Hogg questions that notion of centered consciousness looking onto the world, formulating the past into a coherent whole. Unlike Mack, I am quite satisfied to say that Hogg does want to represent "the evening tale round the fading embers," where stories are told in a circular, haphazard way, where the storyteller retrieves narratives from memory, recollecting as she retells. Hogg frequently calls upon the motif of the evening tale and storytelling has an important function to perform in his historical narratives. A most striking example of Hogg's use of storytelling and a decentered consciousness takes place in chapter three of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, where the narrator gives way to Walter Laidlaw to tell the story: "but as Walter was wont to relate the story himself, when any stranger came there on a winter evening, as long as he lived, it may haply be acceptable to the curious, and the lovers of rustic simplicity, to read it in his own words" (18). This comment frames the subsequent written narrative as if it were an act of storytelling.

And yet, the editorial remark that follows this statement is equally fascinating: "he drew it out to an inordinate length, and perhaps kept his own personal feelings and prowess too much

in view for the fastidious or critical readers to approve" (18). Readers are reminded that there is an enlightenment editor/narrator framing Walter's narrative. The narrative proceeds in Walter's Scottish Border dialect, adding a reality effect to the story and locating it in a specific, local cultural frame, a typical element of oral tales. To give way to Walter's Border dialect at this point is also to foreground language. The dialect is for the uninitiated reader is nearly impenetrable, to an extent symbolizing the impenetrability of the very past and emphasizing that our recourse to the past is through language, which cannot possess the past. However, following White's assertion about the illusion of a centered consciousness, I want to suggest that there is something more at play here than tales spun around the hearth.

Evening tales told by storytellers around the family hearth are always different from official tales circulated by history-tellers among the wider community. In Levinas' terms, Hogg brings the two different discourses face to face. While it is tempting to note a proto-Marxist binary structure here, reminiscent of Raymond William's distinction between practical consciousness and official consciousness, a disjunction that George Eliot will pick up on later in the century, Hogg radically collapses the dichotomy. Disjointedness of various types and degrees not only marks *The Brownie* but also the *Confessions*, as well as the more coherent and unified works like *The Three Perils of Woman* and a collection of stories, *Tales of the Wars of Montrose.* Hogg's fragmentary, discontinuous narratives offer a commentary on the way we tell the past and its aesthetic representations. Disjointedness is the only way to discuss the past. As we have seen, Hogg takes disjointedness literally in the *Confessions* when he dismembers the body.

In *The Brownie,* by allowing for multiple voices and perspectives and not least by allowing an equilibrium and confusion between enlightenment and romantic historiography,

Hogg tests the limits of historical representation and exposes the illusion of a coherent communal narrative. The betrayal of this illusion has consequences for the narratives imagining a national identity. Hogg's aesthetic, much like Scott's but more radical, juxtaposes an Enlightened and Romantic historiography. He blasts open the Benjaminian continuum of history to show history's discontinuities by giving many versions of the past, by juxtaposing official historical discourse and what Hogg calls "traditionary" history, stories told around the family hearth. By disclosing various versions of history, Hogg disturbs the Enlightened linear historical discourse and makes clear that history is all lie and yet all true. Histories are told with the different and varying pretensions and ideologies of the history-tellers. Walter takes over the narrative and decides in the face of dire consequences to help out a band of Covenanters in hiding. The burden of his story is to tell of fellow feeling and his repugnance of the oppression of humankind: "I dinna gie a bawbee about your leagues, and covenants, and associations, for I think aye there's a good deal o' faction and dourness in them; but or I'll desert a fellow-creature that's oppressed, if he's an honest man, and lippens to me, od, I'll gie up the last button on my breast" (23). Hogg wants to unveil that what matters when discussing the past is the preservation of something more precious than history — basic human dignity. It appears then that human dignity enters as a third element between the official and practical ideological structures, as something transcendent and beyond language and discourse practice.

This attitude is nowhere more striking than in the passages that focus on Nanny Elshinder, the household's elderly servant who comes to stay with the family after Walter is taken away by the Royalists on the charge of having Covenanting sympathies.[31] Hogg describes

[31] My reading of Nanny is partially in debt to Katie Trumpener's short analysis in *Bardic Nationalism* (218-19).

Nanny as a "character not easily to be comprehended" (42). Part of the reason we cannot comprehend Nanny is that she mutters to herself while working; she "seldom looked up, and all the while sung scraps of old songs and ballads, the import of which it was impossible to understand" (43). Nanny sings fragments of old songs; her narrative is disjointed; Katherine gradually collects pieces of Nanny's past through listening to her fragmented chanting. Significantly, though, while we cannot understand the full meaning and implication of the songs Nanny sings, we are told she "chaunted these with a pathos that seemed to flow from the heart, and that never failed to affect the hearer" (43). This pathos that flows from the heart adds to Nanny's incomprehensibility, subtly implying that there is a universal heart standing beyond both the Royalist and Covenanting principles. Together with Katherine, readers cannot discern with whom Nanny's sympathies lie because she happens to sing songs celebrating Covenanters while publicly proclaiming "prelatic principles:" "How Nanny came to sing such a song, with so much seeming zest, after the violent prelatic principles which she had so lately avowed, [Katherine] could not well comprehend" (46). There is a palimpsestuous play between what Nanny publicly declares and what she believes inwardly, a constant overwriting of her own narrative. Hogg lets us read through the palimpsest layers and lays bare Nanny's sympathies as in the scene when Katherine overhears "with astonishment" Nanny recollecting to herself "in two distinct voices" an interrogation (46). What is striking is Hogg's decision to present Nanny's fragmentation and apparent madness as a direct result of civil war. As such, Nanny stands as a testament to the meaninglessness of violence. Katherine overhears Nanny mimicking a voice of a Royalist soldier threatening a woman to "burn her with matches — squeeze her with pincars" (46). We later learn that this woman is Nanny. Katherine openly confronts Nanny about her alliance, and Nanny in a

harrowing instant dismisses language as unable to represent the truth of her faith and the horror she has been subjected to for the sake of her beliefs: "Words are nothing to the disbelieving — mere air mouthed into a sound. Look at this for a test of *my* sincerity and truth" (99; emphasis in original). Nanny exposes her ears, which "were cut out close to the skull," her cheek branded "with a hot iron, as deep as the jaw-bone" (99). The violent traces of an interrogation are inscribed and remain on Nanny's body: "All these *I* suffered for that cause *in this same body*; mark that; for there is but one half of my bone and flesh here" (99; emphasis in original). Her body is a space upon which the narrative of the civil war has been imprinted. Nanny's emphasis on *my* sincerity and what *I* suffered *in this same body* — a body which is no longer the same for now it is only half of what it used to be — indicates the state of a national identity that has split in two on the grounds of religious belief, each half presumably sincere and suffering its own version of pain. The idea of one's private suffering is intensified at the moment when Nanny's private conversation with the memory of her dead husband is intruded upon by Katherine: "That was atween God an' me — There was neither language nor sound there for the ear o' flesh!" (94). While words cannot express Nanny's suffering, the language used to express suffering, to share suffering with her God should not be witnessed. Nanny accuses Katherine of such gross violation of her heart and conscience: "Ye are the mistress here, and ye keep the keys o' the aumbry, the kitchen, the ha', an' the hale house; but wi' the secret keys o' the heart and conscience ye hae neathing to do!" (94).

Hogg stresses this point of "the secret keys o' the heart and conscience" at the end of *The Brownie*, when Katherine, believing she has offended her father by aiding those who "were on the adverse side to you and my mother, as the government of the country," pleads for forgiveness

(163). But Walter proudly exclaims, "Deil care what side they war on, Kate! ... ye hea taen the side o' human nature; the suffering and the humble side, an' the side o' feeling" (163). To be on the side of human nature and feeling is what is at stake, and to tell history from the perspective of human nature and feeling is Hogg's storytelling ideology. In *The Brownie*, Hogg emphasizes the oppression of the Covenanters; in *Three Perils of Woman,* he allows himself to side with the Highlanders and call the battle of Culloden a "general carnage" (361). This is why it is not much of contradiction that Hogg's sympathies lie with the Covenanters but also at other times with the Highlanders, especially after the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1746 (Hughes 10). For Hughes, Hogg is always on the side of groups "that have been dispossessed and are consequently suffering cruelty both in mind and body" (10). This humanist approach enables Hogg to sympathetically treat groups at the opposite ends of the political and religious spectrum. It is, of course, Walter's skepticism that fosters his belief in standing on the "side o' feeling" and "human nature."

While Hogg's narrative complicates the very notion of religious discourse — Nanny reminds us that words are worthless to the those who do not believe — earlier in the narrative, his conventionally romantic description of religious faith on one end and incomprehensibility of such another complicates notions of a universal heart and conscience:

> From the midst of that inhospitable wilderness — from those dark mosses and unfrequented caverns — the prayers of the persecuted race nightly rose to the throne of the Almighty — prayers, as all testified who heard them, fraught with the most simple pathos, as well as the most bold and vehement sublimity. In the solemn gloom of the evening, after the last rays of day have disappeared, and

> again in the morning before they began to streamer the east, the song of praise was sung to that Being, under whose fatherly chastisement they were patiently suffering. These psalms, always chaunted with ardour and wild melody, and borne on the light breezes of the twilight, were often heard at a great distance. The heart of the peasant grew chill, and his hairs stood all on end, as he hasted home to alarm the cottage circle with a tale of horror. Lights were seen moving by night in wilds and caverns where human thing never resided, and where to foot of man seldom had trode. (11)

The passage betrays two ways of responding to the Covenanting prayers: much like the later description of Nanny's prayers, to all those who witness the "Almighty praise," the prayers are full of "simple pathos" and "bold and vehement sublimity." I read Hogg's use of "sublimity" here as an impassioned awe-inspiring feeling one gets listening to prayers that bespeak earnest sadness. But there is also the more traditional, perhaps Burkean, sublime at work here suggesting something incomprehensible and terror ridden. The prayers are of a "wild melody;" they are heard from the depths of an "inhospitable wilderness" and caverns, instilling fear in the local peasant who does not understand the prayers. Hogg uses traditional bodily responses to describe this sublimity: the peasant grew "chill" and his "hair stood all on end." Yet Hogg's narrator seems to equate himself and his reader with the first response, and thus he writes into the passage an ethical response to the Covenanter's prayer. The sympathy also lies with the ignorant peasant, who faced with a chant he does not understand, applies an immediate register of folk tradition: "the shepherds were certain, or believed they were certain that no human being frequented these places, and they believed, as well they might, that whole hordes of spirits had taken possession

of their remote and solitary fields. They lived in terror and consternation" (11). What *The Brownie* will do, however, is consistently show that the wild melodies are sung by people not much different from the peasants who fear them, and that while the fearful peasant reads these foreign sounds as inhuman, they are indeed sounds of human suffering. Hogg provides us with two distinct ways to respond to the wild chants heard from the depths of the solitary caverns, and his own narratorial voice does not master either.

In this way, Hogg stands in direct opposition to Scott's treatment of Waverley's response to his British identity during the battle of Prestopans. While Scott's authorial voice is ambiguous, there are moments in his narratives where his heroes exercise mastery over events. Recall here the famous scene in *Waverley,* when the story's hero reduces the Highlanders to an ultimate foreign other, and Waverley's sudden perception of the Highlanders controls the text:

> They approached so near, that Waverley could plainly recognize the standard of the troop he had formerly commanded, and hear the trumpets and kettle drums sounds the signal of advance, which he had so often obeyed. He could hear, too, the well-known word given in the English dialect, by the equally well-distinguished voice of the commanding officer, for whom he had once felt so much respect. It was at that instant, that, looking around him, he saw the wild dress and appearance of his Highland associates, heard their whispers in an uncouth and unknown language, looked upon his own dress, so unlike that which he had worn from his infancy, and wished to awake from what seemed at the moment a dream, strange, horrible, and unnatural. (332)

Waverley is fighting on the Jacobite side, led by his youthful and, in the most reduced sense of the term, romantic notions, but as he confronts the British army, his apparent national identity is reawakened. The registers of nationhood to which Waverley responds are in line with Herder's: Waverley first responds to his British identity by seeing the flag, a powerful cultural symbol of the state and nation and he responds to language. It is at this point of marking out cultural differentiation that he starts seeing the Highlanders as wild in appearance, their language sounding foreign. He looks at himself in Highland dress and feels "unnatural." In this way, one could argue that Scott diffuses the complexity and confusion in a civil war. By contrast, Hogg's imagined brownies and ghosts, while made foreign to an extreme, are exposed as the oppressed group of a *divided* nation. Hogg's commitment to an anti-rational aesthetic turns out to be in the service of a rational ethic, given that "human nature" was associated with Enlightenment notions from France and skeptical Scottish philosophy. He explores the possibility of using a romantic aesthetic to communicate an enlightened ethics that appears to rely on dismembering and transcending a coherent national identity and a coherent national / historical narrative.

3. "A being of such unearthly dimensions entered, as pen may never wholly define"

Hogg's communal stories lay bare the confused, fragmented, and decomposing materials of the past. Hogg's communal stories and anecdotes, while inviting the past into the present, never rehearse nostalgia for a coherent national past. This is not to say the stories might not invoke nostalgic feelings in a reader towards the past, but the nostalgia is not a blind spot in the retelling of past events. In other words, nostalgia, if it appears in Hogg, does not seek to tame the otherwise unruly and wild past. As Carlyle would put it, Hogg gives an honest and earnest look

into the face of the past and is not always able to represent the past in a systematic and disciplined manner. Hogg, then, indirectly paves the way to Carlyle's historical sublime. In the face of history, Hogg's narrative emerges as site of disturbance and loss without need of repair *and* a space within which the past persists despite the fact that the "pen may never wholly define" it.

The opening chapter to *The Brownie,* invites us into the humble parlor of Walter Laidlaw to eavesdrop on Walter's prophesy — "It will be a bloody night in Gemsop this" (3) — anticipating a violent retaliation against the Covenanters after a group of Highlanders have been found murdered. As Walter discusses his anxiety with Maron, his wife, he introduces a suspicion harbored by both: that the Highlander soldiers met their death in the face of a fantastical creature — the Brownie of Bodsbeck — and that their daughter, Katherine, might have something to do with the murders. As the couple faces this suspicion, the conversation is suspended and Hogg's narrator intrudes upon the scene: " [Walter] knew not what to think, to reject, or believe — the other believed all, without comprehending a single iota of that she did believe; her mind endeavored to grasp a dreadful imaginary form, but the dimensions were too ample for its reasoning powers; they were soon dilated, burst, and were blown about, as it were, in a world of vision and terror" (8). Hogg pits the two dominant discourses of the day: the skeptical, rational discourse of the Enlightenment — Walter's reluctance to believe — and religious discourse wrapped up in Maron's rather fanatical and fantastical imagination. In this passage, neither skepticism nor belief offers consolation. Maron's mind reaches a point of sheer sublimity as it faces the incomprehensible vastness of its own magnitude and recoils upon itself in terror. The reasoning powers fail in the face of a powerful and violent play of the imagination that dares to

speak their daughter's implication in the murder of the Highland soldiers. Maron's recoiling imagination signals something even more dangerous to Hogg's narrator's mind. We learn in the following chapter that Maron is under the spiritual guidance of the officiating priest, Clerk. Her imagination then is carefully crafted by a Catholic ideology of the period: "The goodwife of Chapelhope was particularly attached to him and his tenets; he held her completely in leading strings; her conscience approved of everything, or disapproved, merely as he directed" (14). Hogg's narrator emphasizes that Clerk praised Maron's knowledge "in true and sound divinity and the Holy Scriptures" of which, Hogg states, she "was grossly ignorant" (14). Maron has learned how to use religious terms; she has accepted Clerk's "cant" but she has no understanding of that which he professes. Thus, the narrator concludes Maron "was just such a character as would have been a whig, had she had the opportunity of hearing them or conversing with them" (14). The rhetorical strategy here is significant. Hogg paints an unfavorable picture of the Catholic priest but is very careful not to make it easy for the reader to side against the Royalist party and Catholicism. Maron could easily be a Tory or a Whig, Catholic or Covenanter if the right hands got a hold of her. The problem is not in the religious doctrines but in the minds that interpret or fail to interpret them, a point he will build to an extreme in the *Confessions*. He subtly exposes the emptiness of religious ideology, theological doctrines are "cant" in Clerk's mouth. Believing in a theological set of rules without understanding them is dangerous to an extent that it can lead a parent to suspect her child of murder. Hogg will push the danger to its extreme when he places Katherine in the Old Room with Clerk, with Maron's unsuspecting allowance.

The Old Room plays an important role in the story. First, it is a room in the Laidlaw's house in which no one tends to go because it is believed to be haunted by the Brownie of Bodsbeck. Second, as it is revealed later, it is the room in which Katherine heals the wounded Covenanters and supplies them with necessary provisions. On all grounds — romantic and realist — this room disturbs limits. It is only fitting then that Hogg chooses to have Clerk nearly rape Katherine in the Old Room. It is in the Old Room that folklore and reality meet, or where malevolence in the guise of religious benevolence and youthful innocence face off. Hogg's contemporary readers must have been appalled by the scene in the Old Room — to the reader it is immediately apparent what Clerk's intentions are and Hogg in his guise of modesty does not really veil Clerk's lurking sexual desire for Katherine: "It is unmeet to relate the conversation that ensued; but the worthy curate soon showed off his true colours, and with unblushing front ventured a proposal that shocked the innocent and modest Katherine" (88). Katherine, however, manages to stay in control and requests an hour for reflection, which Clerk grants. At the instant the hour is up, the cock crows and Katherine gently sets aside the Bible she has been reading and "heave[s] a deep sigh, like one that feels a sudden relief from pain, and a beam of joy shed its radiance over her countenance" (90). Clerk reminds Katherine of her promise, lifting her up and carrying her towards the bed at which point

> the outer-door that entered from the bank was opened, and a being of such unearthly dimensions entered, as pen may never wholly define. It was the Brownie of Bodsbeck, sometimes mentioned before, small of stature, and its whole form utterly mis-shaped. Its beard was long and grey, while its look, and

> every lineament of its face, were indicative of agony — its locks were thin, dishevelled, and white, and its back hunched up behind its head. (90)

The brownie's "form utterly mis-shaped" calls to mind the disjointed text that inscribes the story of the Brownie of Bodsbeck, whose story "pen may never wholly define." The Brownie was accompanied by more "of the same species of haggard beings" but it was only him who advanced "with a slow, majestic, and swaggering pace" (90). Katherine is saved by the unearthly creature, while Clerk "sunk powerless on the floor, and, with a deep shivering groan, fainted clean away" (90). The belief in local lore overpowers the Clerk.

It is in the figure of the Brownie that both romantic and empirical discourse meet. The superstition and the folklore of the shepherd community is dismantled and explained away: "The truth was, that the phantoms of superstition had in measure fled with the shadows of the night, which they seldom fail to do" (153). The Brownie around which much of the plot is situated turns out to be John Brown, a historical personage and "strenuous and desperate reformer" (*BB* 166). Hogg strips away the essence of the very title of his own novel — *The Brownie of Bodsbeck.* However, even when phantoms are dispersed, "they, indeed, remain in the bosom, hid, as it were, in embryo, ready to be embodied again at the fall of the long shadow in the moon-light, or the evening tale round the fading embers" (153). Although the Brownie is really John Brown, the local belief in him as a fantastic creature produces real effects: it saves Katherine and the Covenenters. In this sense, the stories about him are true even if they are not empirically accurate.

4. "The very individual spot where such and such things happened"

Mirror, mirror on the wall, whose history is truest of them all? If historical narratives mimetically mirror real events, they rely on a stable notion of referentiality, "truth," or at least have to contain within them an aura of truth — a Carlylean possibility that such a past existed. But even Carlyle cautions on defective mirrors. *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* stands face to face with Scott's *Old Mortality,* exposing the face of the past that Scott's Old Mortality tries to preserve by refurbishing the tombstones of fallen Covenanters. Both narratives take for their setting the year 1685 and increasing persecution of the Covenanters by the Royalists. But while *Old Mortality's* editorial frame is split and controlled by two editors — Jeddediah Cleishbottom and Pattieson — both of apparent Royalist sympathies who still allow for Old Mortality's chiseling to define the past, Hogg's narrative is told by a narrator who attempts to expose the violence of the period, and whose sympathy lies on the side of the Covenanters but not because he shares their religious principles but because he sides with the oppressed party.

Although published a little over a year after *Old Mortality*, in 1818, Hogg insisted that he wrote the story well before Scott penned his, a claim he makes both in his *Memoir of the Author's Life* (1807) and *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* (1834). In his *Memoir,* Hogg writes:

> I suffered unjustly in the eyes of the world with regard to [*The Brownie*], which was looked on as an imitation of the tale of "Old Mortality," and a counterpart to that; whereas it was written long ere the tale of "Old Mortality" was heard of, and I well remember my chagrin on finding the ground, which I thought clear, preoccupied before I could appear publicly on it, and that by such a redoubted

> champion. It was wholly owing to Mr. Blackwood that this tale was not published a year sooner, which would effectually have freed me from the stigma of being an imitator, and brought in the author of the "Tales of My Landlord" as an imitator of me. (44-5)[32]

Criticism has wrapped itself up in trying to either disprove or support Hogg's claim of having written *The Brownie* before *Old Mortality*. But Hogg's concerns with being Scott's imitator are not simply grounded in a rivalry concerning who wrote this particular history first. Hogg would have been, to my mind, more concerned with the fact that readers are missing the mark. Scott, a novelist, is not his source. He is generating his story from various accounts, official and traditional histories. Hogg is not mirroring Scott's version of the past — if this is the mere case, then Hogg is putting up a defective mirror. Scott disapproved of the way Hogg described Claverhouse and the Royalists, charging Hogg with giving a false picture of the past. Hogg transcribes a most amusing account of their discussion in his *Familiar Anecdotes:*

> "I have read through your new work Mr Hogg" said he and must tell you downright and plainly as I always do that I like it very ill — very ill indeed."
>
> "What for Mr Scott?"
>
> "Because it is a false and unfair picture of the times and the existing characters altogether. An exaggerated and unfair picture!"
>
> "I dinna ken Mr Scott. It is the picture I hae been bred up in the belief o' sin' ever I was born and I had it frae them whom I was most bound to honour and believe. An' mair nor that there is not one single incident in this tale — not one — which I

[32] For complete discussion of the publication debate, see Douglas Mack's exposition in the introduction to his 1972 edition of James Hogg's *Memoir of the Author's Life and Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott.*

> cannot prove from history to be literally and positively true. I was obliged sometimes to change the situations to make one part coalesce with another but in no one instance have I related a story of cruelty or a murder which is not literally true. An' that's a great deal mair than you can say for your tale o' Auld Mortality." (106)

What is significant to mark here is Hogg's reference to the stories he has been reared on, stories told to him by his grandfather and uncle, the two figures Hogg often refers to for anecdotes and tales. It is the stories told around the family hearth that are "literally and positively true" — the stories of the mountain and fairy school. But what Hogg has in mind is not truth of a scientific order; this truth is of a higher order; it is a living truth of stories that come to us from the past. And it is here that we should be reminded of White's debunking the illusion of the centered consciousness. Scott's *Old Mortality,* as we have seen in the previous chapter, does not clearly serve as an ideological center as often claimed — he masterfully tailors different perspectives and frames the story with two editors. Yet for Hogg, Scott was still not radical enough because he attempted to stitch the historical patchwork. Hogg, on the other hand, lets the *Brownie of Bodsbeck* unravel in two plots and two ways of retelling the past. Scott continues to insist that Hogg's work is a "distorted a prejudiced and untrue picture of the Royal party" (107). Scott's own novel presented for the most part the Covenanters as "a party strongly influenced by extreme religious fanaticism," causing much controversy in the early part of the nineteenth-century when in Scotland the Covenanters "were widely revered as the defenders of the civil and religious liberties of the nation" (Mack xiii). In fact, as Mack argues, John Galt wrote *Ringan Gilhaize* (1823) in direct response to Scott's representation of the civil war (xiii), claiming that

Scott "treated the defenders of the Presbyterian Church with too much levity, and not according to my impression from the history of the time" (qtd in Mack xiii). It appears that for Galt, the "history of the time" is verifiable and that there is only way to tell it. Galt is then confident that his understanding of the "history of the time" is more correct than Scott's.

But the confusion that the past left behind, the impressions that history stamps on the minds of the past's afterlife are varying: Scott's depiction of 1685 does not accord either with Galt's or Hogg's impression of the history of the time. In turn, Hogg's depiction of 1685 does not agree with Scott's impression of the past. Galt is unfair towards Scott's depiction of the past in *Old Mortality*: as I have demonstrated in Chapter 2, Scott's historical imagination is ambiguous. In a similar way, Scott is unfair towards Hogg's depiction of the past: Hogg tries to represent the past in all its complexity and variations; for nearly every "prejudiced" account of the Royalists, he offers a "prejudiced" account of the Covenanters. In an equal manner, Hogg simultaneously treats empirical and romantic attitudes towards the past, layering narratives and perceptions, obscuring concrete facts in much the same way as his sea adventurer in "The Surpassing Adventures of Allan Gordon," fails to find, despite his earnest expectations, a pole at the North Pole.[33] Hogg's concern is not so much to represent the past as it truly was but to represent the narrative of the past, its construction through storytelling. History represented through narrative might raise suspicion because its scientific status is betrayed, but, as White argues, the absence of a scientific account of past events "is not sufficient reason to deny to narrative history substantial truth value" (*CF* 44). Narrative history, as White suggests, deals with truths that "are of an order different from those of its social scientific counterpart" (44).

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[33] See Penny Fielding's "Norths: James Hogg and post-Enlightenment Space" in her *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography, North Britain, 1760-1830.*

For Hogg, narrative history deals with truth embedded in anecdotes and stories shared within a community. Thus, Hogg's narrator in one of the *Tales of the Wars of Montrose,* "Wat Pringle o' the Year," privileges his own account over official histories of the battle of Philiphaugh in 1645 in which the Royalist army headed by Montrose was destroyed by the Covenanters: "Now I must tell the result in my own way and my own words for though that luckless battle has often been shortly described it has never been truly so and no man living knows half so much about it as I do" (197). The narrator proceeds to correct "the far best and most spirited description of this battle" written by "Mr Chambers," whose account has been nevertheless "misled by the two Revd Bishops Guthrie and Wishart on whose authority his narrative is principally founded" (198).[34] The narrator will now correct them all since he knows much more than anyone else because as it happens his grandfather was "personally acquainted with several persons about Selkirk who were eye witnesses of the battle of Philiphaugh" (197). Interestingly, however, the narrator never heard his grandfather relate the story; rather, he heard them retold by his uncle: "Now though I cannot say that I ever heard him recount the circumstances yet his son William my uncle who died lately at the age of ninety six has gone over them all to me times innumerable and pointed out to me the very individual spots where such and such things happened" (197). According to Gillian Hughes, this must be the same uncle Hogg refers to in "Odd Characters," in *The Shepherd's Calendar,* where he describes him as "still alive, near to a hundred years of age, with all his faculties complete; and as he well remembers all his father's legends and traditions, what a living chronicle remains there of the past!" (298). While

[34] According to Gillian Hughes, these are Hogg's principle historical sources for *The Tales of Montrose* (*TWM* 299). Hogg repeatedly references Robert Chambers' *History of the Rebellions in Scotland, from 1638 till 1660,* Henry Guthry's *Memoirs*, and George Wishart's *Montrose Redivivus* in *The Tales.* In the Notes to Hughes' edition of *The Tales,* Hughes traces how Hogg uses these historical accounts to "his own ends" (231).

acknowledging that he never heard the story from his grandfather but his uncle, Hogg's narrator invites a greater complexity to storytelling. As he completes his own account of the battle, he tacitly accepts that "it may be said and will be said that my account is only derived from tradition. True; but it is from tradition of a people to whom every circumstance and every spot was so well known that tradition could not possibly be incorrect" (198-99). While putting to question his own use of tradition, he reverts to insisting that it "could not possibly be incorrect," and it cannot be incorrect because the stories are embedded in communal memory that we are asked to accept as more true than truth itself. Aside from people knowing "every circumstance" of an event, Hogg places emphasis on place — "every spot" — within which events occur. Being connected to the region, having an insider's territorial knowledge seemingly add truth value and credibility. However, Hogg is not always certain about territorial knowledge. Neither can he properly think the past nor does locality help. We only need to remember the confusion of the suicide's burial ground in the *Confessions* and start questioning Hogg's attitude toward space and locality. Thus, Hogg foregrounds the question of perspective when retelling events of the past — is it an outsider's or insider's tale?

Locality, region, space — the very perimeters — the physical place where an event occurs — act as a point of origin for the imagination to play with the historical referent. Hogg played with the location of the suicide's grave and with the very grave itself, desecrating it to a point of an unreadable slimy heap of dirt and bones, and he repeatedly plays with space and one's perspective of local landscape. Scott's historical narratives are regional but they also emphasize cross-overs as when his more rationalist, English, or for that matter British, characters cross over into Scotland, with the most famous exception of *The Heart of Midlothian's* Jeanie

Deans crossing over from Scotland into England. Similar to these regional crossings and crossing overs, is Scott's negotiation between the space of history and the space of fiction as well as the mutual contest between the faculties of reason and imagination. Examining these negotiations in my discussion of Scott, I have recalled the Wordsworthian imagination which is "reason in her most exalted mood" (*Prelud*e XVI 192). In my reading of Scott, reason and imagination are not easily distinguished nor should they be — the space of the historical romance allows Scott to play the faculties one against another. Moving backwards again, we find that Hogg takes on Scott's imagination head on in his tale "Highland Adventures," localizes it, centers it, but only to unravel its workings. First published in Hogg's satiric periodical *The Spy* in 1811 and later reprinted in his most celebrated work of prose fiction, *Winter Evening Tales* (1820), the essay's surface is clear and readable; in fact, on its own the essay stands somewhat insignificantly in Hogg's opus. Ian Duncan relegates Hogg's essay as a belated satire on the vogue for Highland tourism set in motion by the publication of Scot's *Lady of the Lake,* appearing "one year (and nine editions) after the poem" (558). But in this essay, Hogg brilliantly decenters both Enlightenment and Romantic treatment of experience within the space of the Highlands, the region that Scott romanticized extensively.

In the "Highland Adventures," Hogg's narrator, by all accounts urban, learned, and enlightened, travels to the Trossacks that Scott immortalized in *Lady of the Lake:* "So wonderous wild the whole might seem, / The scenery of a fairy dream*."* The lines are quoted right underneath the essay's title, immediately calling up Scott. For a writer of the mountain and fairy school, the quote's perspective would seem sympathetic. But in this essay, Hogg takes on the skeptic's anti-Romantic aesthetic point of view. The essay is written in letter form, addressed to a

"sir," possibly the editor of *The Spy*. What at first reading appears to be, as suggested by Duncan, a satire of Highland tourism inspired by Scott's *Lady of the Lake,* evolves into a complex and relatively sustained argument about the romantic aesthetic. In satirizing the Trossacks as a commercial commodity, Hogg's narrator weaves a subtle argument that reduces the sublimity of the landscape, unveiling a certain ideological function of the romantic aesthetic. Yet while the narrator pokes fun at the sublime experience, the authorial voice appears to poke fun at the narrator. It is difficult to pin point exactly the author's and narrator's ideological perspectives because the essay is embedded in irony, offering competing messages that the reader needs to decode but cannot decode.

He starts off the essay by invoking Scott's *Lady of the Lake* and charging it with a great fault, namely, that it "contains no one fact" (108). To the narrator's mind, the human mind has the "desire of affixing the stamp of reality on such incidents as interest us" (108). "The soul of man," he writes, "thirsts naturally and ardently for truth" (108). In fact, according to this narrator, the "author who ceases to deceive us with the appearance of [truth], ceases in proportional degree to interest our feelings on behalf of the characters which he describes" (108). While Scott's other poems operate "fairly without the bounds of probability," they still relate to some facts, so that, according to the narrator, the mind may be pleased as by an "authentic narrative" (108). But the *Lady of the Lake* "never once leaves the enchanted field of probability" and "the *possibilit*y is not even left of attaching the idea of truth to one event" (108, emphasis in original). He grants to the poem its ability to "delight in delusion" but he staunchly asserts that he has "never read it without regretting that it had not been founded on a fact" (110). And yet this narrator with all his condemnations about truth and the lack thereof in Scott's delightful and

delusional poem, sets off on an expedition to experience the sublime Trossacks. His inability to locate Scott's vision of the Trossacks within the Trossacks themselves is "an effect rather distressing to reflection on viewing every scene of action referred to in the poem" (108).

Upon approaching the Trossaks, Hogg's narrator anticipates having a textbook romantic experience of nature: "I wished to lose myself in the Trossacks alone; to have no interruption in my contemplation; but to converse only with nature, please myself with wondering at her wildest picture, and wonder why I was pleased" (111). What the traveler finds, however, is that Scott embellished the Trossacks to a degree, adding to their aesthetic and sublime effect: "Mr Scott has superseded the possibility of evermore pleasing, by a second description of the Trossacks, but in so doing he has certainly added to the pleasure arising from a view of them" (111). The textual aesthetic of Scott's Trossacks is exposed — it is not that that the natural landscape is sublime in itself; rather, Scott's textual description materializes their aesthetic effect. In other words, the textual rendering has materialized the Trossacks as a sublime generating object, albeit with a little help of Highland whiskey: "Whoever goes to survey the Trossacks, let him have the 11th, 12th, and 13th divisions of the first canto of the *Lady of the Lake* in his heart; a little Highland whiskey in his head; and then he shall see the most wonderful scene that nature ever produced" (111). Thus, Scott's landscape is not real; it is not a truth but a delightful delusion. There is here an even more important argument concerning the romantic aesthetic and its liability to be misunderstood. Hogg's narrator emphasizes that he wants to converse with nature in order to please himself in the face of her wonder and then to turn back on himself and reflect on why he is pleased. The narrator's focus is on pleasure alone. He reduces Wordsworth's, and, for that matter, Coleridge's project of figuring the lost face of God in nature or, in a wider sense,

humanity to a form of pleasure. In the rhetoric of the romantic ideology headed by Wordsworth, conversing with nature has a greater function to perform than simply to provide pleasure. Conversing with nature may yield healing answers to the increasing void experienced by increasing political, economic, and social fragmentation, and not in the least, to allude to J. Hillis Miller, the disappearance of God in the early nineteenth century.[35] In Kant, pleasure is a kind of interest that interrupts the disinterested experience of the sublime. There is a sense, however, that the authorial voice behind the narrator understands that "conversing with nature" does not simply require of one to sit inebriated beneath trees and wait to be pleased.

On his way to the Trossacks, the narrator encounters an "old crusty Highlander," who supports the narrator's assertion of Scott waxing poetic over what in reality is, according to the old Highlander, " a few rocks and bushes, and nothing else" (109). The Highlander dismisses our narrator as one who must be " too idle" with "very little to do at home" since otherwise he "would not be in fashion" and about the Trossacks. (109). To meet an "old crusty Highlander" in 1811 is significant if we take into account the historical event of the Highland Clearances. The Highland Clearances took place outside of the Trossacks area, but regardless Hogg's readers would understand the backdrop of the lowland and highland antagonistic social and economic relations. Scott famously projects the violent transition from rural farming to more advanced agricultural practices in *Rob Roy.* Rob Roy has his lands taken away and Scott certainly pits Jarvie and mercantile, capitalist Glasgow against the rural, feudal Highlands. Hogg's essay of course is written before Scott writes *Rob Roy*, so in 1811 it may have reminded Hogg's readers

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[35] See J. Hillis Miller's *The Disappearance of God* in which he surveys the struggle with the absence of God in the works of de Quincey, Robert Browning, Anne Brontë, Matthew Arnold and Gerald Manley Hopkins.

of history's Rob Roy, especially since that the Trossacks were Roy's territory. But the text's 1820 reprint may have reminded readers of Scott's Rob Roy.

Hogg invites reality into the romantic landscape in the guise of the old Highlander, whom the authorial voice never mocks. Significantly, it is the Highlander who questions the fascination with the Trossacks. Even more significantly, the Highlander does not operate like a device for the narrator. It would not be amiss to imagine Wordsworth using the Highlander to weave a condescending argument about the picturesqueness of the Highlander himself, calling on us to experience, perhaps, as he does overlooking Tintern Abbey "the still, sad music of humanity" ("Lines" 91). In the Highlander's point of view, the area is just rocks and bushes and nothing else, subtly implying that it is time to leave off the nostalgic imaginings. It is the outsider, the lowland bourgeoisie and the gentlemen farmers who impose progress on the Highlander's rural community that now take walking tours around the Trossaks, trying to imagine a past which they sought to eradicate. Hogg does not make this analysis — he simply invokes this solitary Highlander to question the traveler's interest in the Trossacks. But the traveler who is apparently so much in earnest search of truth does not recognize truth when it speaks to him face to face; namely, he does not recognize the Highlander.

Near the end of the account, Hogg's traveler has a self-reflexive ironic moment when standing on top of Ben-More, which he tells us is the highest mountain in the Trossacks: "I remained in this exalted station as long as the chillness of the atmosphere of that region would suffer me, and I flattered myself that I was in reality as much delighted with the country as any of those could be to whom it belonged; and as proof of my supposition, concluded that none of them would have climbed Ben-More at such a season to get a view of it" (117). Certainly,

because they would know not to. Hogg's traveler experiences extreme difficulties in descending the mountain, an adventure he describes in full detail in the essay but keeps from relating to the Trossacks locals "for fear of being laughed at" (118).

Even when tackling a serious subject matter, like the events the British annals would rather erase, Hogg is liable to poke fun, to insert a statement or two that stands as inappropriate in relation to what he is discussing, and to undo his own work as he undoes the suicide's body. His ironical play makes it difficult for the reader to figure out what Hogg is really about. But perhaps this is the point: we cannot decode Hogg fully as we can never decode fully the past. In the instance of digging him up, we bury him all over again. To climb Hogg's work is to have difficulties in descending it, and much like his Trossack explorer, I am in "fear of being laughed at" for seriously contemplating a writer who constantly laughs and turns everything upside down. Yet when I allow myself to climb over his texts, I get an excellent albeit hazy view of his historical imagination. Hogg's mountain and fairy school weaves a textual past that anticipates Benjamin's ideal of storytelling based on an oral tradition which allows "that slow pitting one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers which constitutes the most appropriate picture of the way in which the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings" (Benjamin 93). Whether Hogg delivers the "perfect narrative" is up for debate, but here I suggest, that storytelling and the "variety of retellings" mark Hogg's palimpsestic historical imagination. The various stories offer a duality (real / romantic) that Hogg consciously and expertly uses in order to represent what he considers the "truth of history." Graves move or their locations are misremembered, individual spots betray our memories, the pole is not at the North, so that Hogg's narratives, inherently tied to particular spots and regions, also question the

relation between narrative and referent, between the nation and its collective narrative. He mixes communal, local beliefs and empirical evidence to complicate both the merely sentimental national tale and the merely rationalist history, so that Hogg's own texts reluctantly become the "very individual spot where such and such things happened."

Chapter IV: "Unravelling certain human lots:" Shattering the Universe in Eliot's Historic Imagination

Carlyle, Scott, and Hogg persist on George Eliot's historical palimpsest. Her narratives seek to write the Romantic solitary individual back into the community, to make her an ethically responsible member of society. In *Romola* (1863)*, Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), and *Middlemarch* (1872), Eliot invokes what Richard Rorty would call "ironic liberalism," envisioning the individual's negotiation between her value systems and those of the community. She endorses a developmental and contingent vision of history's unfolding paradoxically grounded in a transhistorical ethics of sympathy. While in some respects she is close to Carlyle in her belief in essential bonds that weave humanity together, Carlyle's aesthetic that seeks to express this notion is itself wound up in inexpressibility and the aesthetic of the sublime. Eliot diverts here from Carlyle by formulating an aesthetics of realism that seeks to unveil essential humanity legibly and transparently.

In George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* Dorothea Casaubon, "who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant history" (183), responds to Rome's sublimity in a way that would leave the arch-idealist Kant heavily disappointed. The magnitude and aura of the "huge bronze canopy" and the "vastness of St. Peter's," which electrify Kant and send his mind to the limits of episteme, will spread themselves "everywhere like a disease of the retina" of Dorothea's eye (184). The Vatican's magnitude fails to seize her in the Kantian "bewilderment" and "perplexity" of the mathematical sublime unable to excite the heights of imagination and provoke a sublime experience from within the observer (*CJ* 26. 112). Poor

Dorothea sees nothing but material remnants of the past, "ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present" (184).

Upon first reflection, Eliot's historical imagination will not admit sublimity. In 1876, in one of her personal notebooks, Eliot writes a passage that reads like an instruction, and in the margins she calls the passage "The Historic Imagination." Eliot explains this imagination: "I want something different from a doctrinal point of view, and something different from the schemed picturesqueness of ordinary historical fiction. I want brief, severely conscientious reproductions, in their concrete incidents, of pregnant movements in the past" ("HI" 447). The passage is short and leaves the reader yearning for more. Despite its brevity and surface simplicity, her idea of the "historic imagination" opens a complex world of varied textual pasts, which reveal multi-layered moments of rupture between the past and present, the self and community, the private and public, the subject's interiority and exteriority.

In a single move, Eliot sets her imagination against the dominant strands of nineteenth-century historical discourse. She rejects histories written from a "doctrinal point of view;" in other words, she spurns the growing trend in Victorian historiography, which we may understand as the type of history Herbert Butterfield contemptuously calls Whig history.[36] She also passes over the idea of picturesque and ordinary historical fiction, the type of historical fiction which uses history superficially as a background for the plot, and in the process draws a picture of an idealized past. What she instead envisions as her task as a writer of historical fiction resembles at first glance a historical imagination indebted to the Enlightenment. She wants "conscientious

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[36] In his classic study, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, Butterfield defines "Whig" history as one that looks for references to the present in the past. Essentially, it is a history that puts the past into the service of the present, justifying the present. Although Butterfield has been perhaps slightly judgmental and reductive in his interpretation of Whig history and nineteenth-century historical discourse in general, his definition serves my purposes for the present.

reproductions" and "concrete incidents." In other words, she values the mimesis and empiricism advocated by the German "science of history" movement led by Leopold von Ranke. She wants "pregnant movements." Certainly, these "pregnant movements" suggest that the past has within it the fetal present, suggesting some sort of causal and deterministic relationship between the past and present. These rules she sets for her historic imagination — mimetic, empirical, and causal — correspond to fundamental conventions of her realist literary aesthetic. For a fuller understanding of the role the past plays in the present, her historical narratives should be critically reread within the wider framework of the realist genre. Yet her narratives will often betray both what she sets out for her historic imagination and her realism, putting to question the mimetic, empirical, and causal. In reading *Romola*, *Felix Holt, the Radical,* and *Middlemarch*, I argue that Eliot's historical narratives while seemingly teleologically driven, undo the positivist historical project and its rhetoric of progress. Her realist aesthetic and material vision demonstrate a liberal ironic stance that allows her to observe her community and historical unfolding in a detached manner adhering to the highest principles of reason *and* its limits. As such, she practices a heightened ethics that is conscious of the material and the immanent.

1. Interrupting History: Eliot Resartus

I want to start my reading of Eliot's historic imagination with the proems or preludes to *Romola, Felix Holt,* and *Middlemarch.* These paratexts by their nature negate the very idea of an interruption since they set up the narrative and are its foundation. Yet they consistently tease the reader, pull back the reader and interrupt her by posing questions to the very narrative they set into motion. A contemporary of Eliot's female reader may transport herself into Renaissance

Italy and recognize herself in Romola because Eliot pushes her to reflect on the "common human lot." An 1867 reader of *Felix Holt,* engrossed in the story's 1832 historical context may consider the Second Reform Bill in a different light and read the pains of the present onto the pains of 1832 and vice versa. A middle class female reader, content head of the Victorian household, *Middlemarch* resting on her lap, may be interrupted to face the fact that she is, like St. Theresa, a "foundress of nothing" (2). The proems are different but each carries within itself a comment on historical (public and private) continuity within change, of aggressive transformations and silent revolutions. Each proem acts the role of Benjamin's angel of history as discussed in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History,* with its face turned towards the past.

Eliot's proems, especially the proem to her historical novel, *Romola*, invites a reflection on Benjamin's reading of Paul Klee's painting, *Angelus Novus*. In Benjamin's reading, the angel becomes an angel of history. The angel's face is turned towards the past, a past described as a "pile of debris" (258). Benjamin presents us with a subtle dialectic between the past and present, and a synchronous movement of the historical process. He explains that "where we perceive a chain of events, [the angel] sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (257). What the angel wants to do, according to Benjamin, is "awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (257). In a more material sense, what the angel wants to do is impose order on this ruin of history — connect the dead to the present, make a coherent, unified world view of history. However, a "storm is blowing from Paradise," writes Benjamin, and "has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them" (258). This violent storm is what "we call progress," and pushes the angel towards the future.

On the surface, it seems that Benjamin's historical process is, in fact, diachronic for one can with ease read the image of "wreckage upon wreckage" as a metaphor for a chain of events, and the storm as a metaphor for a new event, a storm conjured up by the linear historical process. However, Benjamin's complex image of the past as a pile of debris excludes any causation — this is a disorderly mess. Storms are never coherent nor unified and to think of progress derived out of a violent image that Benjamin has drawn for us (especially when we consider that the angel's wings are caught up in the storm) is no idealization of the idea of humanity's progressive development. More significantly, even as the storm comes, bringing progress, it never clears up the pile of debris (something storms can do); in fact, the debris "grows skyward" (258). There is no linearity in the image because while the angel is pushed forward into the future, the past appears not have ceased, persisting and growing toward the transcendental, but a littered not reassuring transcendental. Benjamin's angel of history is caught in a gap between the past's debris and the strong current of the future — he is precisely caught up in the moment of interruption that is, as we have seen in the previous chapter, central to Levinas' concept of the historical process.

Back in 1863, Eliot sends an angel to survey Florence. *Romola,* whose plot is set in Renaissance Florence starts off with a double perspective negotiating between Florence of the fifteenth-century and that of the nineteenth. The narrator masterfully weaves a double vision: we see what and how the angel sees but we also see the angel looking onto the changed landscape, and thus we are at once able to enter into detached and nostalgic encounters with the past. Eliot will repeatedly resort to this narratorial technique in her texts. It is such doubling that makes it difficult for us to pin point Eliot's ideological leanings, *and*, more to the point, enacts

interruptions in the historical process. By facing the inherent contradictions and points of undecidability in Eliot's aesthetic project we can begin to understand the relationship she draws between the aesthetic and ethical.

Eliot's proem to *Romola* immediately sets the past and present in a reflective position. However, upon a closer look the reflection is not simple; it is not a matter of holding up a mirror of the present to see in it the past's reflection. The angel of dawn, who has flown over the fifteenth-century Mediterranean would have seen what he sees now as he looks over the Mediterranean of the nineteenth-century: "we are sure that that the angel of dawn, as he travelled with broad slow wing from Levant to the Pillars of Hercules [. . .] saw the same great mountain shadows on the same valleys as he has seen today" (1). Not only is the landscape the same but also "the river-courses which have shaped the lives of men have hardly changed; and those other streams, the life-currents that ebb and flow in human hearts, pulsate to the same great needs, the great loves and terrors" (1). The emphasis of this naturalizing and organic metaphor is on transhistorical continuity. The narrator aligns his and the reader's vision with the angel's: "as our thought follows close in the slow wake of the dawn, we are impressed with the broad sameness of the human lot" (1). Human history and the multiple variables that make it have been reduced to one human lot, "which never alters in the main headings of history — hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death" (1). Eliot's narrator concludes that what makes the human lot is not only same but continuous in its unalterability.

Eliot seems to hint at a dichotomy, however, when she sets dawn against morning. The narrator negotiates between two distinct historical discourses, the universal world-view represented by dawn, mapping out progress but allowing for constancy in essential human values

and manners, and a more particularized, material focus represented by morning, on a certain "historical spot" (1). Dawn metaphorically represents the initial stages of knowing, of becoming aware of the past and the historical process — these first stages we take in comparing the past with the present may mistakenly lead us to conclude that the human lot never alters.

By setting this microscopic focus on a particular city in the past against the angel of dawn's initial Mediterranean world-view, the narrator focuses our attention to another element: that of a certain historical spot. The linear trajectory from dawn to morning is broken. The narrator contemplates an interruption and "our imagination pauses on a historical spot and awaits the fuller morning" (1). Surely, it is an awkward image because we expect a linear movement from dawn to morning. The narrator beckons our imagination to pause, leave off the dawn and look into the morning. Thus the fuller morning, that is, fuller meaning, is tightly associated with the imagination — it is through the imagination that we access morning. Notice what the fuller morning unveils. Where in the dawn, we were "sure" that the angel sees the same valleys and mountains as he saw in 1492, in the fuller morning, we are no longer sure but we "may" see a city "hardly" changed (1). "Hardly" implies that a change occurred. In addition, the city stands as "an *almost unviolated symbol*" (1-2; my emphasis). The self assurance of the angel of dawn is displaced by a less assertive voice, by a vision that notes the sameness but implies a difference and a change: to say that the city is "an *almost unviolated symbol*," is to say that the symbol has been violated.

The narrator tries hard to deny the symbol's violation and its failure to transcend historical accidents. This almost unviolated symbol stands "amidst the flux of human things, to remind us that we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them" (1-2). The

narrator juxtaposes contingencies with the transcendental. Yet while it is intended to remind the reader that there are intrinsic values that remain unchanged, Eliot knows better. According to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus,* one of Carlyle's books Eliot most admired, even symbols of the most transcendental values will decay. Carlyle teaches his readers that symbols "wax old" (165). Time violates symbols. Still, Eliot's narrator turns upon himself, asserting yet again against the prospect of the symbol's violation that if the "spirit of the Florentine citizen [. . .] would return from the shades and pause where our thought was pausing, he would believe that there must still be fellowship and understanding for him among the inheritors of his birthplace" (2).

This moment of undecidability between the symbol's transhistoricity and historicity interrupts the insistence on a causal, positivist linear history. At the moment when the narrator insists that the city "has hardly changed," the need to shift perspective yet again arises. For at this moment in the proem, the narrator asks readers to imagine that a fifteenth-century "Shade has been permitted to revisit the glimpses of the golden morning, and is standing once more on the famous hill of San Miniato, which overlooks Florence from the south" (2). The reader at once sees what and how the spirit sees *and* sees the spirit looking.

The Florentine ghost is "clothed in his habit as he lived" (2). The Carlylean clothes mark the ghost's concrete, material historical moment. But as Teufelsdröchk's clothes philosophy insists, clothes are only a surface marker subject to wear and tear, eventually dissolving. Eliot's narrator unveils the layers of cloth, exposing a "penetrating face" beneath the clothes, a "face charged with memories" (2) — a face upon which traces of the immaterial, transcendental past are inscribed. The face tells a different story than the "folds of his well-lined black silk garment" (2). And it is faces that the narrator asks the ghost to look at in order to see through the

material changes into a universal past that binds humanity: "look at the faces of the little children, making another sunlight amid the shadows of age; look, if you will, into the churches [. . .] see upturned living faces [. . .] These things have not changed" (7). To look into the church the way the narrator advises the spirit, is to look into the face of God, which supposedly transcends the architectural dwelling — the institution of the Church — and yields the universal "beneficent love and ascending glory" (7), that truth beyond the "official and monastic" scholarship (7). The truth is to be found in those upturned faces and "lips moving to the old prayer for help" — in the private lot of the people, in the inner experience (7). The narrator specifically warns the spirit: "Go not down, good Spirit! for the changes are great and the speech of Florentines would sound as a riddle in your ears" (7). The narrator cautions the spirit that if he chooses to re-enter the past, he should "mingle with no politicians [. . .], ask no questions about trade;" and most of all, he should not make "inquiries into scholarship, official or monastic" (7). The metaphor of altitude is striking, suggesting that a view from above offers a transcendental vision, while a view from the ground level is embedded in historicity — a point that Eliot's narrator in "Janet's Repentance" had already developed. All of these — politics, economics, religion — are Carlylean clothes, symbols that decay with time. In *SR*, Carlyle's German philosopher has already asked us to reflect on the extrinsic values and the "motives" that underlie our "Christianities, and Chivalries, and Reformations, and Marseillese Hymns, and Reigns of Terror" (163). Even when a symbol has intrinsic value, even when we can "discern Eternity looking through Time" (*SR* 165), the symbols eventually "wax old" (165).

Eliot's Florentine spirit is instead to look "at the sunlight and shadows on the grand walls that were built solidly" (7). The grand wall endures, but these are only the surface, the material

and hold no greater meaning. The grand wall, like the point of origin or the original writing on a palimpsest becomes a surface upon which new meanings are inscribed. Thus, Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh kindly reminds us that Homer's Epos "has not ceased to be true; yet it is no longer *our* Epos, but shines in the distance, if clearer and clearer, yet also smaller and smaller, like a receding Star;" the original epos, the German philosopher cautions, "needs to be reinterpreted" (165, Carlyle's emphasis). The older texts need to be overwritten. And yet this is not to completely suggest that there are no eternal truths, no essences — there is an original text that is overwritten but the underwriting remains, tangibly pulsating underneath. Carlyle is more explicit in *The French Revolution*, a work obsessed by the symbol:

> How natural, in all decisive circumstances, is Symbolic Representation to all kinds of men! Nay, what is man's whole terrestrial life but a Symbolic Representation, and making visible, of the Celestial invisible Force that is in him? By act and word he strives to do it; with sincerity, if possible; failing that, with theatricality, which latter also may have its meaning. (285)

Carlyle strings together a multitude of opposites: the natural or organic and the made, the contingent and the universal. Symbolic representation is a universal idea that stems from "decisive circumstances;" it is an organic entity that is simultaneously contingent upon external factors. Symbolic representation is also divine — it makes visible that which is invisible and essential, universally true "to all kinds of men." Here, Carlyle subtly infuses the symbolic with an ethical purpose; it binds all kinds of men; and, more to the point, the symbolic representation is always sincere. Even when it is "theatrical" or made, it will be naturalized and made with meaning. The implication is that the meaning behind even the most theatrical symbol is always

essential, intrinsic — true to the decisive circumstance. He asks readers to consider how "sincere and earnest" the "Hebrew Feast of Tabernacles" must have been; "a whole Nation gathered, in the name of the Highest, under the eye of the Highest; imagination herself flagging under the reality" (285). He uses this example to portray "all noblest Ceremony as yet not grown ceremonial" (285), the invisible in its most sincere and earnest inward display. Compellingly, the imagination, the seat of the most penetrating vision for the Romantics, becomes limp under reality. The real emerges as the ideal, which is emblematic of the Carlylean symbolic representation. Carlyle then juxtaposes the inward sincerity with "modern private life" that has become theatrical but nevertheless earnest, and he asks readers not to dismiss "tearful women wetting whole ells of cambric in concert" and "impassioned bushy-whiskered youth threatening suicide" (no doubt thinking of Goethe's sorrowful, suicidal Wether); these he cautions are not to be "entirely detested," urging readers to drop "a tear over them" (286). Thus, via symbolic representation Carlyle enacts sympathy. The modern, private theatricality engenders a subtle and intricate call for an ethical response through sympathy and even pity, but pity as compassion.

While Eliot's proem entertains to an extent the idea of historicity, the novel endorses an idea of organic movement and is an ahistorical history, endorsing transcendental values upon the historical continuum. The image of sunlight and shadow stands for the play between past and present — the children make "another sunlight amid the shadows of the age" — the image of the present interplaying with the past — *and* the sunlight and the shadows "waken the old heart-strains" (7). This image at once reveals and conceals what is here and now and what is lost, invoking sympathy in us for the eternal transient experience. Eliot's narrator immediately invokes the Wordsworthian child declaring that "little children" become "the symbol of the

eternal marriage between love and duty" (8). While Wordsworth haunts the proem at this moment, Eliot must also be recalling Ruskin, whom she already referred to in "The Natural History of German Life," an essay acting as a review of Riehl's historical project but enacting Eliot's own aesthetic project:

> 'Abroad,' says Ruskin, 'a building of the eighth or tenth century stands ruinous in the open street; the children play round it [. . .] the building of yesterday nestle about it, and fit their new stones in its rents, and tremble in sympathy as it trembles. No one wonders at it, or thinks of it as separate, and of another time; we feel the ancient world to be a real thing, and one with the new; antiquity is no dream; it is rather the children playing about the old stones that are the dream. But all is continuous; and the words "from generation to generation" understandable here'" (283).[37]

Eliot's attraction to Ruskin's idea is two-fold. Ruskin's image of the material remnants of the past nestled within the present invokes sympathy because the past is "one with the new" — there is a continuity in spite of the ruinous remnants that jar the present with fragmentariness. "One with the new" also suggests that readers can recognize their own image in the past; thus, a more ideal, universal continuity is represented in the image of children playing with the stones. But Eliot goes on to develop this "conception of European society as incarnate history," which she understands as Riehl's "fundamental idea" (284). She points out that Riehl demonstrates that the democratic and socialist theories out of which revolutions were conducted have failed because of the "bureaucratic system which governs by an undiscriminating, dead

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[37] For an account of Gustav Flaubert's similar experiences with material remains, see Jürgen Pieter's *Speaking with the Dead.*

mechanism" (284). She tells us that Riehl "wishes to urge on the consideration of his countrymen, a social policy founded on the special study of people as they are" (284). While the socialists have broken with the "democratic doctrinaires" who have been occupied "with the idea of 'the people,'" inquiring instead "particularly into the actual life of the people" (284), they still get it wrong because of their "enthusiastic zeal," focusing on the "single fragment of society," the "Parisian proletaries or English factory-workers" (284). By way of Riehl's conception of the multi-layered and diverse natural life of Germany, Eliot starts building her own aesthetic project which will focus on anomalies within the community, on the inner life within the outward. She will split society into parts in order to focus on the individual and interpersonal relationships, which can form a collective.

The democratic doctrines are ultra conservative when posited against socialism because democracy seeks to totalize and construct the idea of a people, offering what perhaps Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* explains as the "formal or systematic beliefs," which are contrary to those "actively lived and felt" (132). William's distinction between the lived experience and doctrine, or practical and official consciousness, helps illuminate what Eliot perceives very early on in the century. For Williams, practical consciousness "is almost always very different from official consciousness" (130). Practical consciousness refers to a consciousness that is "actually being lived" (131). Official consciousness is connected to institutions and formations; and official consciousness is a fixed unit (131-133). We may also think of official consciousness as a lived experience mediated through language, for example, a historical narrative. Williams is interested in the relation between the practical and official consciousness and it is within this relation that he proposes his notion of "structures of feeling,"

a term that is supposed to provide a "distinction from formal concepts of 'world-view' or "ideology" as the structures of feeling "go beyond formally held and systematic beliefs" (132). Thus, structures of feeling are "concerned with meanings and values as they are actually lived and felt" (132); that is, structures of feeling provide a space within which we can examine the intricate dialectical relation between the practical and official consciousness. Ultimately, Williams' structures of feeling are a non-deterministic revision of Marx's superstructure because the phrase demands that first we conceive, in Marxist terms, a base that always produces and determines the superstructure, but at the same time Williams leaves room for various forms of resistance, wherein it is possible to ignore or rebel against the dictates of the base. There are official, dogmatized but naturalized aesthetic responses and there are aesthetic responses which stand out as anomalies within a given aesthetic zeitgeist.

This concern with the relation between the practical and official consciousness — and between the contingent and transcendent — underlies *Felix Holt, The Radical*. Closely tied to this relation is the palimpsestuous play between past and present that is masterfully presented in the introduction to *FH,* yet another instance of narratorial double vision. The tumultuous climate of both the past and present is tangible as at the onset, as Eliot's narrator depicts a dialectical vision of history: "Five-and-thirty years ago, the glory had not yet departed from the old coach-roads; the greater roadside inns were still brilliant with well-polished tankards, the smiling glances of pretty barmaids, and the repartees of jocose ostlers; the mail still announced itself by the merry notes of the horn" (25). The passage proclaims that times have changed, old ways have been replaced — the historical process is well under its way. The image of the coach — a symbol of an earlier English time, has "waxed old." The nostalgic voice, laments the disappearance of

old coach-roads and smiling glances of pretty barmaids, but the nostalgic images are soon replaced with a more sober account of the past. The past inhabited by pretty barmaids was also a time of " pocket boroughs, a Birmingham unrepresented in Parliament . . . unrepealed corn laws, three-and-six penny letters" (26). These are, however, "departed evils" (26). Yet as soon as the narrator asserts the negatives of the past, the narrator reasserts the nostalgic tone: "*Non omnia grandior aetas quae fugiamus habet,* says the wise goddess: you have not the best of it in all things, O youngsters! the elderly man has his enviable memories, and not the least of them is the memory of a long journey in mid spring or autumn on the outside of a stage-coach" (26). I suggest we read this memory as a memory of an experience. By negotiating between a nostalgic vision and a more critical assessment of the past, the narrator signals to us the ironic position of the narrator of history, who calls attention to the gap between official (nostalgic) and practical (antique) consciousness. The narrator foreshadows the epigraph to the novel's concluding chapter: "our finest hope, is our finest memory" (505).

From here, the narrator's perspective becomes more complex and Eliot performs a similar strategy of double vision as in *Romola's* proem. Instead of a Florentine spirit, we now see a passenger riding on a stage coach. We see the passenger seeing meadows "silvered" by morning, "bushy willows," "golden corn-ricks clustered near the long roofs of some midland homestead, "full uddered cows driven from their pasture to the early milking" (26-27). "Everywhere," laments the narrator, "the bushy hedgerows wasted the land with their straggling beauty, shrouded the grassy borders of the pastures with cat-kined hazels, and tossed their long blackberry branches on the corn-fields" (27). The vision of "everywhere" asserts a transcendental meaning. Significantly, we also see what the passenger does not see. The narrator points to the

fact that the passenger cannot see beyond the roofs of the labourers' cottages (27). He can only see a part of reality. The narrator warns that these roofs hide the real face of the parish, the face "which was most likely dirty" (28), but quickly retorts that even if the dirty face were seen, "the dirt was Protestant dirt" (28). With her wry irony, Eliot proclaims that poverty and the ugly side of rural life is beautiful for its own Protestant sake. In other words, the passenger cannot see the reality because he is too much part of it, and his immediate vision is ironically obscured. The Protestant poor were, writes the narrator, "kept safely in the *via media* of indifference" – the coming crises represented by mines and dissent have not made their way yet into the peaceful, Protestant, Church of England, parish (28).

In a relatively short span, Eliot masterfully weaves an ambiguous picture of the past: on one end it is beautiful and peaceful, preserving the English Protestant faith; on the other end, it is "dirty" and restless, fostering rick burners, trade unions, and the Nottingham riots (30). The narrator's commitment to both nostalgia and critique creates an ironic gap in her voicing of history. Eliot's historical vision is founded in a humanistic ideology but is a vision of ambiguity and irony. Her historical vision reveals a moment in which her "historic imagination" accords with her present, and as such, her historic imagination is, in essence, anti-historical. As we will see in the reading of *FH* later in the chapter, the true focus of Eliot's history is not communal, but private.

Nowhere in Eliot is this almost unviolated symbol so violated as in *Middlemarch*. On the surface, the actual geographic space cannot be more insignificant and tempered. The moment of interruption or the gap in the historical process that Eliot's narrators expose by juxtaposing the past with the present in the proems to *Romola* and *FH*, explodes in her later *Middlemarch.*

Tucked safely and quietly in the English provincial Midlands, the town of Middlemarch and Dorothea are symbols of slow paced, safe and linear progress. A progress that will be violently interrupted, in Dorothea's case, at the very moment when stories end: marriage.

As in the proems to *Romola* and *Felix Holt,* the proem to *Middlemarch* stands in seeming odd contrast to the text. Ironically, the novels that carry the names of their principle heroes in the title have proems that center on geographical space and temporal perspective. *Middlemarch's* "prelude" focuses on "human hearts" and the "many Theresas" (1). This signals a more decisive move towards examining the past in relation to the individual's inner life in juxtaposition to the "meanness of opportunity" (1). The prelude is more sombre, even dark and pessimistic, as the narrator shatters the idea of an "epic life" and the possibility of reconciling a "vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood" (1-2). The Saint Theresas, the foundresses of nothing "tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances instead of centering in some long-recognizable deed" (2).

When Eliot returns to contemporary Italy in *Middlemarch*, material pasts or ruins — the past in the present — perform a different role. Eliot leaves behind the belief in a historical continuum that she had set up in *Romola,* and the hint at discontinuity in *FH* is energetically at play in *Middlemarch.* More than anywhere else in the novel, history (and Dorothea herself) is interrupted during Dorothea's honeymoon. Rome, "the city of visible history, where the past of a whole hemisphere seems moving in funeral procession" offers a "stupendous fragmentariness" to the Victorian St. Theresa engendered in the provincial Dorothea (183). The history is at once visible, materially present in the "strange ancestral images," "best galleries," "greatest ruins and the most glorious churches" (183) and a funeral procession, where the observer can at once see

the city's intermingling of past and present. This interplay of past and present impresses Dorothea with the "dream-like strangeness of her bridal life" (183), whose reality is already not matching Dorothea's idealized conception: "for that new real future which was replacing the imaginary drew its material from the endless minutiae by which her view of Mr. Casaubon and her wifely relation, now that she was married to him, was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand from what it had been in her maiden dream" (185). Dorothea's dream takes a leap from the ideal to the real, and the fall is imagined in terms of the march of time. History offers not a comfortable continuity but wretched discontinuity between yesterday / today or ideal / real. History offers interruption and it interrupts Dorothea. While Rome is offered to her in all its past and present glory, Dorothea can only experience it as an "oppressive masquerade of ages, in which her own life too seemed to become a masque with enigmatical costumes" (183).

A life of enigmatical costumes focuses the eye on the surface rather than on an essential interiority. However, the narrator posits this life as a masque, implying that these enigmatical costumes hide and veil a truer life. And yet her experience of Rome offers nothing of the truer, more sublime experience. Rome is just an "oppressive masquerade of ages," which consistently shows a "deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence" (184). The narrator observes that the "weight of unintelligible Rome might lie easily on bright nymphs to whom it formed a background for the brilliant picnic of Anglo-foreign society; but Dorothea had no such defense against deep impressions" (184). For Dorothea, the "weight of unintelligible Rome" does not lie easily. Dorothea feels its weight and experiences a violation of her interiority.

The inability of the material representations to invoke sublimity and in turn Dorothea's own inability to experience the sublime marks the crisis central to Eliot's aesthetic and that propels the ethical response. Both in Scott and Carlyle, the material remains are representations of the void between the past and present, a reoccurring trace of what was. Carlyle asks his historians to read the past and its remains with earnestness. The past needs to be approached with reverence and consequently it is infused with sacred meaning. In the "Discourse of History," Roland Barthes explains that our most valued cultural objects are subsumed by a "sacred quality attached to the enigma of what has been, is no more, and yet offers itself as present sign of a dead thing (139-40). But the sacredness of the object in Dorothea's case is simply not there. Dorothea fails to read herself into the past, as Carlyle urges.

In Dorothea's experience of Rome, Eliot weaves, perhaps unwittingly, a complex discussion on the relation between realist aesthetics and the sublime. The narrator of *Adam Bede* interrupts the narrative to extrapolate on the qualities of Dutch realist art: "it is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness that I delight in many Dutch paintings, which lofty-minded people despise. I find a source of delicious sympathy in these faithful pictures of monotonous homely existence" (177). The narrator boldly asserts: "I turn without shrinking from cloud-borne angels, from prophets, sibyls, and heroic warriors, to an old woman bending over her flower pot" (177). It is precisely because Rome's art fails to represent the *realist* sublime, the truth of the real, that Dorothea's experience of Rome's material remains do not disclose the truth which Dutch realism offers. All she sees are the bare material remains and ruins, the degeneration of history. Dorothea's discourse on aesthetics, which she shyly holds with Will Ladislaw is telling not so much of her inability to engage with Rome as Rome's inability to represent the sublimity

of the past: "I could never see any beauty in the pictures which my uncle told me all judges thought very fine [. . .] At first when I enter a room where the walls are covered with frescoes, or with rare pictures, I feel a kind of awe [. . .] I feel myself in the presence of some higher life than my own. But when I began to examine the pictures one by one, the life goes out of them, or else is something violent and strange to me" (196). Eliot uses the language of the sublime here, but this is not a transcendent sublime experience; it does not offer wholeness but violently breaks Dorothea's vision of reality, a violation Dorothea first resists understanding. Dorothea resists understanding her experience of alienation, violence and strangeness as steps to knowing, to unveiling whatever "higher life" she initially feels. Will tries to explain the "old language" of art, where the "chief pleasure one gets out of knowing" the various artistic styles "is the mere sense of knowing" (196), a knowing that you know but exactly what you know remains unknowable. Will feels frustrated that Dorothea "should be worshipping her husband," the seemingly last inheritor of suffocating, mind stifling positivism (197). Will explains to Dorothea: "the Germans have taken the lead in historical inquiries, and they laugh at results which are got by groping about in woods with a pocket-compass while they have made good roads" (197). Will refers here to the historiographical debate between historical discourse that inspires a sublime historical experience like the sensation experienced when reading Carlyle, *and* positivist historiography, which piles evidence upon evidence not so much to explain the past as much as to justify the present.

Eliot's narrator humorously stands on Will's side. While Will's "hair seemed to shake out light" alluding to an intuitive grasping of knowledge; Casaubon, with his Key to all Mythology, "on the contrary, stood rayless" (199). And Dorothea stands in Casuabon's shadow until the

moment he dies. But we can read also this failure as a success that is not yet apparent to Dorothea. What she sees in the material ruins is her life with Causabon, who likens his mind to "the ghost of an ancient world, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes," which is ruin in itself (13). Unlike Casuabon, Dorothea cannot reconstruct the splendor of Rome; its ruins point to a past that is itself ruinous and confusing, and which no longer exists due to change. It is in Rome that she experiences a fundamental alienation from her own projected reality — it is where her ideal is aggressively ruptured, violated, alienated and torn asunder from her reality. The historical experience is imagined as an act of violence, offering no such consolation. The violent historical experience here is reminiscent of the various corpses of the past in Hogg, which in their grotesqueness, degenerate and haunt to disturb and subvert the present. In this way, Eliot stands against Scott, whose ambiguous relationship to the past and its relation to the present in the end offers at least a safely fictionalized product that in fact consoles the reader and convinces her of the present's correctness.

2. The Possibility — and Impossibility — of Repairing Modernity

Dorothea is caught up much in the same way that Benjamin's angel is caught up in the crisis which is modernity.[38] Dorothea's crises between the ideal of her marriage and the reality she has married into resembles the gap between the faculty of reason and sense experience that

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[38] In *Speaking with the Dead,* Pieters discusses Flaubert's experience of the Roman arena as a space "that welcomes everybody and where both the living and the dead, without distinction, feel at home. It is also a place where the past can be made to speak, not in spite of but because of the impressive silence of the artefacts it has left behind, and the concrete presences of the traces" (86). Flaubert's experience is in direct opposition to Dorothea's. Later, Flaubert will recount fondly this memory, but he will be unable to repeat the experience. As Pieters explains, "modernity's brutal indifference to the past makes it more difficult for Flaubert to experience the sort of historical sensation he once had in Nîmes" (88).

Kant delegates to the mathematical sublime. Her imagination to think other than Casaubon fails. The inability of the imagination to resolve the tension between ideas and sense experience is present as Forest Pyle has shown in the Romantic discourses of Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley. For Pyle, this "failure" constitutes a break, marking a tension between the first and second generation of Romantic writers (5). Pyle reads Shelley's *The Triumph of Time* as a poem that "attempts to theorize the permanently ideological nature of representation," arguing that the text "delivers us to the 'ends' of the imagination" revealing an "epistemological break" similar to the one Althusser noted in Marx's philosophy in the 1840s (5, 98).[39]

In Pyle's radical materialist reading of Shelley, the ideology of the imagination breaks down, failing to construct a world view of history and knowledge. Pyle ends with George Eliot, who, he argues, attempts to repair the break posed by her Romantic predecessors. According to Pyle, Eliot's work emerges at the site of what Pyle refers to as "the Romantic ideology situation" (148).[40] Pyle suggests that Eliot's "narrative project constitutes the most sustained and sophisticated Victorian effort to address the implications and reverberations of Romanticism's epistemological break" (5). Eliot seeks to answer the ideological condition posed by Romantic discourse by positing the thematic principle of "sympathy" (5, 148). In other words, at the

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[39] Althusser borrowed the phrase "epistemological break" from Gaston Bachelard to explain Marx's leap from a Hegelian idealism to his construct of historical materialism; in other words, the break signals the theoretical discontinuity between the "ideological practices of pre-Marxist historians and the scientific practice of historical materialism" (Boyne 181). Althusser rejects notions of subjectivity and agency, and in general dismisses experience because it is ruled by ideological practices that conceal real historical operations.

[40] *In The Ideology of the Imagination*, Forest Pyle specifically examines the concept of imagination as a deeply rooted ideological activity. Thus for Pyle New Historicist "(assumed) transparencies of 'experience' and the 'archive' are inadequate to the ideological opacity posed by the problem of history" (18). According to Pyle, the critical perspectives of New Historicists such as Jerome McGann and Marjorie Levinson, while crucially positing the importance of the return to history and giving primacy to notions such as 'experience' and the "archive' continue to miss the ideological constructions of these concepts that they could address, according to Pyle, if they would rethink and reread Marxism from an Athusserian perspective. Jerome McGann famously argues that the Romantic critical tradition has been caught up in its own ideology by expressing an "uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations" (*Romantic Ideology*, 1). While Pyle builds his own argument based on McGann, he notes the peculiar blindspot in McGann's uncritical attention of experience and the factual.

historical moment when the imagination fails, sympathy will triumph. For Pyle, the rupture Eliot faces is "something to be repaired" and the "possibility of community" depends on the repair (148). Sympathy is Eliot's "narrative response to the Romantic legacy of the imagination" (Pyle 5), a response that, Pyle argues, "speaks to the deep desires of community" (5).

In suggesting that the possibility of community depends on social repair, Pyle suggests that at the moment of transition between Romantic and Victorian discourse, community finds itself in a state of impossibility. What is the relation between this epistemological break located in Romantic discourse of the imagination and the inherent impossibility of a community? The Romantic attitude of solitary imagination makes the imagining of a community unattainable. The rupture is both social and epistemological because her solitary individual and the others (the community) have become mutually unknowable or unimaginable. This unknowability, to my mind, underlies the divide between the practical and official consciousness. In Eliot's narrative, the official consciousness or middle class ideology that is supposed to bind society is repeatedly called into question by private deviations and experiences. Readings like Pyle's come up short in assuming that Eliot attempts to repair these private deviations through an ideology of sympathy. Instead, her project tries to preserve the individual autonomy while simultaneously building community, introducing sympathy as the mediator between them. But she makes sure to let us know that the breach can never be entirely healed.

For Eliot, sympathy's repair always leaves behind traces of debris. Most of Eliot's narratives are situated in a specific historical past, always placing the reader openly at a site of interruption. Like Benjamin's angel of history, Eliot's reader is repeatedly caught up between the past and its narrative debris and the present. Unlike Pyle who claims that Eliot's sympathy is

"the means by which the Romantic wound opened by the imagination is to be sutured, the break closed" (149) and that sympathy is the "binding 'thread' that [. . .] *stitches* the self into the ostensibly organic textures of community" (151, Pyle's emphasis), I argue that Eliot's "stitching" leaves many loose threads for us to pull. While Pyle also notes the discontinuous threads in Eliot's narratives, he concludes that Eliot's "aesthetic teaching" is the most effective "means of concealing the break that it can neither prevent nor cure" (171). In this reading, Eliot's "aesthetic teaching" emerges as nothing but a complex aesthetic machinery designed to conceal the break and sustain middle class ideological blindness. I argue, however, that Eliot is not interested in concealing the break — the ethics of her project relies on depicting the constitutively ironic condition of the self's relation to community. Eliot invokes sympathy in social situations in which characters experience Williams' difference between the practical and official consciousness. She calls attention to the rifts rather than conceals them. Eliot's use of sympathy arises precisely at those moments of rupture between practical and official consciousness, self and community, private and public, past and present, the subject's interiority and exteriority.

In invoking sympathy precisely at moments of interruption, Eliot performs a Carlylean gesture towards the past and its relation to the present or towards the immaterial and its relation to the material. Williams' ethically challenging rupture between the practical and official consciousness recalls what Eliot writes in her 1855 essay on Carlyle, in which she suggests that Carlyle urges men "to seek for the truth and live up to it at whatever cost" ("Thomas Carlyle" 187). To put it in Williams' terms, Eliot, like Carlyle, desires to unveil the gap between the practical and official consciousness, between lived experience and doctrine, and call her readers to wrestle with these tensions and try to resolve them.

What Eliot admires in Carlyle is also her own aesthetic: an interest in rendering the inward struggle, an emphasis on experience and meaning in one's life. In her 1852 review of Carlyle's *Life of Sterling,* she praises Carlyle for his ability to combine "personal intimacy, a loving and poetic nature which sees beauty and the depth of familiar things, and the artistic power which seizes characteristic points" (217) and present readers a "real 'Life,' setting forth briefly and vividly the man's inward and outward struggles, aims, achievement, so as to make clear meaning which his experience has for his fellows" (317). In Eliot's hands, the presentation of a "real life" becomes a prescription for building intersubjective relations. Strong individual relationships need to be established before a collective can even be imagined. As much as Eliot claims that her unit of analysis is Treby or Middlemarch, her real unit of analysis is not the community but the individual. In the individual reader, she wants her aesthetic practice to engender an ethical practice — sympathy. But sympathy will not heal the community. The social repair that Pyle claims is the purpose of Eliot's sympathy fails. It can, however, as in Janet's case in "Janet's Repentance," or in Gwendolyn's case in *DD,* redeem an individual. Eliot emerges as just another Romantic solitary, the difference being that in the context of the Victorian obsession with defining the individual through social networks, Eliot is a Romantic who *knows* she is alienated not from self as in the Romantics but from society. She ultimately modifies the Romantic ideology of solitude and alienation.

Pyle depicts Eliot's "aesthetic teaching" as nothing other than the ideology of the aesthetic — that moment when art serves a dominant ideology. While Pyle's reading of Eliot through Althusser offers a refreshing analysis, the end result, as with traditional Marxist readings of Eliot, offers the same conclusion: Eliot is relegated to being a mere Victorian bourgeois

ideologue. Yet while Eliot's metaphors of weaving and webs build images of organic communities, the self is never fully integrated in these, and her social ethics paradoxically relies on the rupture between the lived experience and dogma. As David Parker correctly suggests, "Eliot's morality is not simply on the side of cementing existing society together; it is much more ambiguous politically than this" (79).

To borrow from Richard Rorty, her voice is the voice of a "liberal ironist" (61), and the ironic part of her liberalism is self-reflection on the doings and beliefs of her own class. *In Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), Rorty imagines a liberal utopia in which people have a "sense of the contingency of their language of moral deliberation, and thus of their consciences, and thus of their communities" (61). Such citizens of the Rortyean liberal society are liberal ironists (61). Rorty explains his vision further by introducing the heroes of his liberal society: the "strong poet" and the "utopian revolutionary" (60). According to Rorty, these figures are alienated and "are protesting in the name of humanity against arbitrary and inhuman social restrictions; they protest "in the name of society itself against those aspects of the society which are unfaithful to its own image" (60). A historical imagination founded on the idea of liberal irony is difficult to master as it can never be comprehensive and universal. Such a historic imagination is by default fluid, contradictory at times, unstable. Rortean liberal irony wonderfully illuminates the narrator's repugnance in *The Mill on the Floss* with "men of maxims," who are clearly not liberal ironists (403). Men of maxims are "guided in their moral judgment solely by general rules, thinking that these will lead them to justice by a ready-made patent method, without the trouble of exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality" (403). Further, readers cannot fully understand Maggie Tulliver's complex character through a "ready-

made patent method." While Maggie is not a fully developed liberal ironist — she herself is unable to understand her own motives and passions fully — the narrator who tells us Maggie's story *is* and demonstrates the futility of Maggie's tragic ending.

Certainly, it is easy to point a finger at Eliot's middle class moralizing and to say, along with Daniel Cottom in *Social Figures* (1987) that Eliot makes room for transcendence but it is ultimately put to the service of historical determinism. Cottom claims that Eliot's "realism transcends romance," but it does so not by transcending the aesthetic of romance and rejecting the values and stylistic conventions of romance; rather, "it transcends as the liberal intellectual transcends society in general: by interpreting it, understanding it, and so gaining the power to patronize it" (125). For Cottom, it is "middle-class morality rather than literary or historical analysis that guides Eliot's pen" (127). For critics like Cottom, while Eliot perhaps mimetically represents the complex opposing power relations in her own texts, her own false consciousness always attempts to mollify the tensions and succeeds in doing so. Thankfully, in the foreword to Cottom's book, Eagleton offers a less reductive conclusion: while Cottom offers a significant reading of Eliot, "it remains true that there is more than one George Eliot, and that they do not always speak in a single voice" (xvii).

It is the George Eliot who "does not always speak in a single voice" that I would like to unveil and restore from the body of criticism that seeks to iron out all tension. Her novels are not as organic (*Daniel Deronda* immediately comes to mind) as often criticism leads us to believe, and the great realist of her time repeatedly — almost programmatically — betrays the very genre that her name has come to identify. Her procedures only seem like betrayals by the standards of

Marxist criticism that labels realism as a genre that dictates terms of reality and upholds bourgeois ideology.[41]

Harry E. Shaw refutes the Marxist tendency to reduce Eliot to a single voice in *Narrating Reality* (1999) where he argues that realism has "nothing to do with 'transparent representation'" (238). Instead, realism "opens up the possibility of multi-voiced discussions and opposing perspectives" (267). According to Shaw, "we instead need to conceive of realist novels as creating a metonymical and rhetorical chain that runs from narrator to reader to the world" (238). To explain such a purpose of the realist novel, Shaw suggests that Eliot's narrators occupy specific historical moments and are, like her characters, placed under constraints of history (238).[42] A fine example of an Eliot narrator occupying a particular historical moment is the one narrating "Janet's Repentance," who makes a point of distancing himself from anyone looking at Mr. Tryan "with a bird's eye glance of a critic" (229). Returning to the metaphor of altitude, the narrator rejects transcendence in order to be on the same level as Mr. Tryan: "But I am not poised at that lofty height. I am on the level and in the press with him, as he struggles his way along the stony road, through the crowd of unloving men" (229). There is a palpable ethical move here: the narrator will not say like the bird's eye critic that Mr. Tryan is just "one of the Evangelical clergy" and "not a remarkable species; the anatomy and habits of his species have been determined long ago" (229). Our narrator who is in the press with Mr. Tryan knows that "under the mere clothes of circumstance and opinion" lies a heart-pulse (229). The implication is

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[41] See for example Steven Marcus' *Representations: Essays on Literature and Society* in which Marcus claims that Eliot does not pose epistemological limits on her narrators.

[42] What further makes her narrators highly intriguing is that they are historically and materially conditioned by the past which they relate and by the present from which they narrate. For example, the narrators in "Janest's Repentace," *Mill on the Floss, Felix Holt, The Radical, Middlemarch* all have direct experience of the past they attempt to represent. The only narrator who comes to mind and who does not have a direct link to the historical moment which he expresses is the narrator of *Romola*.

that the Carlylean clothes of contingency are misleading — there is something beyond circumstance and that something is the "life and death struggles of separate human beings" (229). Here as elsewhere, Eliot marks both the crisis and the possibility of her realist aesthetic. Her text always at once points to the contingent here and now *and* to the unconditional eternal, those double visions she exercises in the proems to *Romola* and *FH*. She is aware of the multiple realities that cannot be represented textually, of the blindness that permeates her narrators' vision even when they appear omniscient. This is the point of undecidebality in her texts — the point of rupture. Thus, the very materially bound narrator insightfully remarks:

> Our habitual life is like a wall hung with pictures, which has been shone on by the suns of many years: take one of the pictures away, and it leaves a definite blank space, to which our eyes can never turn without a sensation of discomfort. Nay, the involuntary loss of any familiar object almost always brings a chill as from an evil omen; it seems to be the first finger-shadow of advancing death. ("JR" 226)

"The definite blank space" is an image of the Levinisian trace or of the past's debris in Benjamin's terms. Our attention is called to focus on this blank space, and it jars our eyesight — we experience "sensation of discomfort." The blank space opposes Victorian mechanism and conformity. The definite blank space jarringly confronts habitual dejection caught in the here and now and a blind optimism for all that is new. Shortly after this, the narrator critically assesses the change that has entered Milby: "in those distant days, as in all other times and places where the mental atmosphere is changing, and men are inhaling the stimulus of new ideas, folly often mistook itself for wisdom, ignorance gave itself airs of knowledge, and selfishness, turning eyes upward, called itself religion" ("JR" 227). The narrator offers an indignant critique of

philosophy, science, and religion. These attempt to cover the blank spaces. For this liberal ironist, neither branch of intellectual history — progressive or pessimistic, Whig or conservative — is safe from an unreflecting and blind attitude toward progress. Both historiographies reach their epistemic limit in death, beyond which the historian of whatever ideology cannot go. Upon the "blank space" called history, the past is paradoxically inscribed. Pointing at once to its absence in the present moment and its continual presence in the past, it is reminiscent of Scott's palimpsestuous history, which in the very act of erasing the traces of the Jacobite risings, reinscribes them into the communal memory of his readers. Like Scott's histories that rupture a unified vision of Britain, Eliot's blank space interrupts her characters' and her readers' habitual lives.[43]

3. "Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult": Obscure Mirrors and Confused Reflections

In her most famous narrative interruption — *Adam Bede's* chapter "in which the story pauses a little" (175) — Eliot puts her own aesthetic to question and ultimately serves us with, to borrow from George Levine, a "mixed condition." The narrator bluntly states, "Falsehood is so easy, truth so difficult" (176). To illustrate the point, the narrator asks us to "examine [our] words well" and concludes that "it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about our own immediate feelings — much harder than to say something fine about them which is *not* the exact truth" (177). In *Silas Marner*, Eliot's Mr. Macey states it most clearly: "I'm for holding with both

[43] Consider the ending to *Waverley* and the happy union between Rose and Waverley, a unified Britian, which will live in the refurbished Bradwardine Jacobite estate. Among the additions to the estate are two paintings: "It was a large and spirited painting, representing Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress; the scene is a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the were descending in the background [. . .] Beside this painting hung the arms which Waverley had borne in the unfortunate civil war. The whole piece was beheld with admiration, and deeper feelings" (489). All the traces of war and violence have been erased — Waverley restores the estate to its pre-war glory, but the presence of this painting points to a past beyond its material canvass. For Eliot a removed painting jars the habitual perception; here the addition of the painting jars the Union.

sides; for as I say, the truth lies between 'em" (*SM* 54). Truth is difficult because it is inherently a "mixed condition," and it always lies beyond our linguistic abilities. The only way we could rebut Mr. Macey's disgust with us, is if we could be competent enough to "apprehend the conditions of ghostly phenomena" (54).

So, how do ghostly phenomena fit in with truth? More than any other literary genre or artistic movement in general, realism is always entangled in "truth" and material conditions. It is difficult to find room for Mr. Macey's ghostly phenomena in a material world. And yet, in Levine's *Realistic Imagination* (1981), the title embodies a mixed condition, since the terms of the phrase "realistic imagination" seem to contradict one another, defining another epistemological break. Levine claims that his initial purpose was to put Victorian realism to question, to draw out the Victorian writer's self-consciousness "about the nature of their medium" (4). Eliot's self-consciousness, her self-reflexive narratorial moments, are inspired by a concern that her empirical aesthetic is not adequate to represent the complexity of the material conditions that make up reality. And more significantly, Eliot's concern is that the empirical orientation towards facts make the text all about clothes and not their underlying essence. This just as well may be Mr. Macey's concern and the idea behind "ghostly phenomena." Thus, Levine set out to demonstrate "a direct historical continuum between the realists who struggled to make narrative meaningful and modern critics who define themselves by virtue of their separation from realism and even from narrativity itself" (4).

Levine wanted to show the indeterminate and self-reflexive nature of Victorian realism. Yet Levine located the Victorian impulse as not merely positivist but as an attempt to "reconcile empirical science with metaphysical truth" (10) which as he noted undercut his initial project.

Levine proceeds to offer readings of Mary Shelley, Scott, Eliot, Thackeray, Trollope, and Hardy that note this impulse of reconciliation. Similarly, Neil McGraw recently argued that "Eliot strove to understand, to appreciate, and to depict human existence in totality (81), while conceding that the "metaphysical nature of Eliot's perception of history lingered throughout her career" (84). Thus, for McGraw, Providence and Destiny that appear in Eliot's texts offer "metaphysical rationales for historical change" (85) and "unify and assign moral-spiritual meaning to human experience in the face of a confusing, dispiriting present" (85).

However, there was also another impulse in nineteenth-century thought, one already glimpsed, somewhat awkwardly, in Scott and brought vibrantly forward by Carlyle — a move to sever experience from truth. After all, a proud Gwendolen, who perhaps says more than she understands, boldly asserts, "Imagination is often truer than fact" (*DD* 47). Eliot's self-consciousness marks a face-to-face encounter with the debate between empiricism and metaphysics, which for Eliot, as for Carlyle, is a question at the heart of an ethical relation between an individual and communities of the past, present, and future. In this sense, Eliot picks up, perhaps more seriously or with greater intellectual rigor, what Scott has already brought to question in his historical romances and what Carlyle's treatment of historical narrative and representation has demonstrated with great force.

In *Past and Present,* Carlyle's play with the mirror trope, and his warning of the mirror's defectiveness speaks louder than Eliot's. He first asks the reader to look with him into "this singular *camera lucida*" through which can catch a glimpse of those who inhabited the past (47). The choice of metaphor for looking into or reading history is intriguing. Reading history is conducted through an optical device, a lens and prism system through which a virtual image is

seen. But the image is virtual, apparent, not *real*. To push the emblem of virtuality and apparition further, I suggest that the *camera lucida* in question here is a metaphor for language, as language is the medium by which we communicate with the past. However, language by no means enables a pure look into the past since the past is sublime and resides beyond the linguistic. The optical device reflects an image, an apparition materializes before us. By extension, then, language becomes a space of haunting, a ghost-like inscription of the past on the blank page of history. Jocelin's historical narrative, as noted earlier, rests before him as the most obscure, defective *and* deflective mirror, an "altogether imperfect 'mirror'" of the past (47). The past is elusive in Jocelin's imperfect narrative — it is both present and absent. The truly skillful and ethical historian, the Carlylean historian, recognizes the materiality of language, its presence and its absence, and will then forge a more honest and earnest translation of the past into historical discourse, a sublime discourse aware that it is caught up in an unsolvable double bind.

In *FH*, Eliot provides a striking example of haunted language, or more to the point in the following example, of haunted writing. The material remains of the names inscribed on the locket's surface — Annette and Maurice — and the inscriptions in the journal are more than mere plot conventions of the long lost letter stock that reveal the heroine's identity. Eliot plays with the power of writing itself here to convey or fail to reveal the past. The writing and the trace of writing work together to inscribe a mental picture of the past on Mr. Lyon's mind. Mr Lyon examines the note-book closely and notes the erasure that speaks more loudly than the name that is inscribed. There is a third name "beyond the names Maurice Christian, which had themselves been rubbed and slightly smeared as if by accident [. . .] Mr. Lyon could not prevent himself from transferring the mental image of the third name in faint lines to the rubbed leather" (192).

Like the removed pictures that leave a mark on the wall, the erased letters still bear a faint presence on the leather of the note-book symbolizing the palimpsest structure of the past and the idea that the truth whatever it may be and however extensive it is, is often irritatingly located beyond the letter. Both the material sign and its trace must work together to generate a fuller picture.

In "The Natural History of German Life" (1856), Eliot exposes the inadequacy of language: "language may be a perfect medium of expression to science, but will never express *life*, which is a great deal more than science" (282, emphasis in original). Practical and official consciousness do not coincide. The relation between language and representation, as we have seen in both Scott and Carlyle, is even an issue that most positivist empiricists like Hume examined and is at the root of Enlightenment's skepticism. Eliot describes the effort of the scientific community that seeks to locate a rational basis for language and to create "a language which has no uncertainty, no whims of idiom, no cumbrous forms, no fitful shimmer in many-hued significance, no hoary archaisms." (282). In short, writes Eliot, "a deodorized and nonresonant language, which effects the purpose of communication as perfectly and rapidly as algebraic signs" would be a language that cannot articulate life. While Eliot concedes that the language we have and use, where "one word stands for many things, and many words for one thing; the subtle shades of meaning, and still subtler echoes of association" is an "instrument which scarcely anything short of genius can wield with definiteness and certainty," it is the only language that is able to express life (282). Herein lies an implicit commitment to faithful representation, but this commitment lies already in the awareness that life cannot be fully known and therefore to represent it faithfully is to represent it with "subtle shades or meaning, and still

subtler echoes of association." These shades and echoes express the twofold haunting quality of language — language itself is haunted by the reality that it seeks to represent and in turn language is a specter in its own right, embodying within it a reality that is always more or less beyond its grasp. In other words, Eliot claims that in order to represent life language cannot afford to be straightforward; it is precisely its disjointedness that is to be valued. The disjointedness arises not only from the notion that there is experience or life that lies beyond the linguistic, but also in the acceptance that we cannot simply categorize and label that which is before us.

In her pause in *Adam Bede,* Eliot confronts the common understanding of the realist aesthetic, still prevalent today, as a mimetic movement — realism's project is to represent nature or reality faithfully. In this case, the nineteenth-century novel will act like a mirror and reflect reality, show what life is really like with, perhaps, the goal of a moral re-education of its readers in the service of progress, humanity's development, or whatever moral program is at stake. Realism is conscious of the fact that what it has to offer is a fiction, but it offers this fiction as a mimetic representation of reality. The most obvious problem with mimesis is that it presupposes and demands of us to accept that reality is knowable, and that such reality can be represented and confined to a narrative. Finally, it demands of us an acceptance of a single, unified, and coherent reality — it demands linear causation. And yet such an understanding of realism is most reductive.

Eliot is conscious of the questions and the complexity that realist aesthetic offers. She first distances herself from the "clever novelist," who does not place demands on himself to represent "nature and fact" as they are and instead chooses to "represent things as they never

have been and never will be" (175). In other words, the clever novelist deals with the improbable, so he is in essence a writer of romances. The clever novelist is obviously on the very margins of the possible and impossible. The implication is straightforward: the clever novelist is not interested in representing nature and facts, so he pulls at the robe of free playing imagination. Eliot then proceeds to explain that she aspires to nothing more than to present us with a "faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in [her] mind" (175).

While she is not going to be a "clever novelist," she is also not going to be one that claims to represent nature and fact as they are; she qualifies her aesthetic project by claiming that she aspires to represent nature and fact as they have been *reflected in her mind*. On the surface, it seems like a straightforward declaration of her aesthetic project, but Eliot is elusive and presents us with a complex irony. For in the end, we will get nature and fact as mirrored in *her* mind, which places her rather too close to comfort with the "clever novelist." She then masterfully continues to blur the lines between realism and imagination by acknowledging that the "mirror is doubtless defective; the outlines will sometimes be disturbed; the reflection faint and confused" (175). No doubt, and this is stated in the white space between her aesthetic project and the distance she tries to create between herself and the "clever novelist," the defectiveness of the mirror, its disturbed, faint, confused reflections stem from the space in which the mirror is held up to reality, namely, her mind, which is also the prime seat of the imagination. But Eliot does not let this idea rest. She pushes on, claiming that all she can do is simply tell us what "the reflection is, as if [she] were in the witness-box narrating [her] own experience" (175).

Consequently, the narration is twice removed from reality: it is her Lukácsian reflection *on* her mind's distorted reflection *of* reality.[44]

Underlying this statement are two implications. One, whatever she relates, she relates from experience, to what is open and accessible to her senses — thus derived empirically. Two, the realist aesthetic in her hands is a matter of perspective, and she slyly invites relativity into a mode of representation that relies on an objective and faithful representation. The truth of correspondence and faithful representation depend on the simultaneous play between objectivity and subjectivity, between representing objective reality through subjective reflections (Hillis Miller 65). And Eliot is always ready to remind us that these reflections are defective. Defectiveness in Eliot's case is not to be understood as a sort of misrepresentation but as the inability to fully represent the complexity of experience and life — language cannot sustain experience. She puts a fine point on this notion in *Daniel Deronda*:

> Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under differing circumstances. We recognize the alphabet; we are not sure of the language. (111)

Attempts at describing "all at once" are "stupid" because we will fail in the project. The innumerable impressions echo Carlyle's innumerable biographies, the attempt to get at reality through piling up stories that often may even contradict one another. To recognize the alphabet but not the language implies that we recognize the form but not the syntax; not only is a human

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[44] In the *Theory of the Novel*, Lukács writes: "the novelist's ethic vis-à-vis the content, is a double one. His reflexion consists of giving form to what happens to the idea of real life, of describing actual nature of this process and of evaluating and considering its reality. The reflexion, however, in turn becomes an object of reflexion; it is itself only an ideal, only subjective and postulative; it too, has a certain destiny in reality which is alien to it; and this destiny, now purely reflexive and contained within the narrator himself, must be given form" (85).

being a composite of innumerable layers but these layers depend on certain external contingencies. The external contingencies are of interest to Eliot as they both determine inner life and are determined by the inner life. For Eliot the relationship between the internal and external is almost always dialectical, seldom monological. This intricate relation between exteriority and interiority enables Eliot to reason through the complex internal lives of her characters, the contradictions and tension that reside within them. Consider the narrator's contemplation of Gwendolen in *Daniel Deronda*: "She had the charm, and those who feared her were also fond of her; the fear and the fondness being perhaps both heightened by what may be called the iridescence of her character — the play of various, nay, contrary tendencies" (*DD* 42). The iridescence of character is not that different than the iridescent lights and shadows of *Romola's* proem, where the shadows seemed to magically create continuity out of disparate colors. The iridescence of Gwendolen's character beautifully illuminates the narrator's point about the human being's multiple layers that depend on circumstance. The narrator continues by arguing against Macbeth's "rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment" (42). According to the narrator such an understanding of human nature, or one's inner life, refers to the "clumsy necessities of action and not to the subtler possibilities of feeling" (42). The narrator drives the argument to a halting conclusion: "We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent, we cannot kill and not kill at the same moment; but a moment is a room wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance" (42).

Romola, Eliot's heroine bred by historic imagination, is perhaps even more murderous and repentant than Gwendolen. And so is Savonarola, Florentine's religious state apparatus,

whose "nature was one of those in which opposing tendencies coexist in almost equal strengths," a man of God who has a "keen perception of outward facts and a vigorous practical judgement of men and things" (523). This is Eliot's poetic way of saying that Savonarola is able to distinguish between practical consciousness and official consciousness. When in *Redguantlet* Scott places Darsie Latimer before the blundering, stammering bureaucrat, Darsie is able to resist Althusserian hailing and subjection simply on the account of having no memory and knowledge of his identity. Paperwork is not strong enough to subject Darsie. Scott was ironically playful to an extent. Eliot, however, is not at all playful when she places a weeping Romola beneath a cypress to contemplate the extent of her free will:

> all things conspired to give her a sense of freedom and solitude: her escape from the accustomed walls and streets; the widening distance from her husband [. . .] the great dip of ground on the roadside making a gulf between her and the sombre calm of the mountains. For the first time in her life, she felt alone in the presence of the earth and sky, with no human presence interposing and making law for her. (355)

While solitude barring "human presence interposing and making law" is appealing, Eliot subtly hints at the illusion of freedom Romola experiences. If "all things" *conspire* to give Romola a sense of freedom, "all things" are not working in her best interest. All things are secretly preparing to hurt Romola — to offer loneliness instead of freedom. The implication is that while freedom from "human presence interposing and making law" may provide a liberating feeling and solitude, Romola feels *alone* — the individual is meant to engage in intersubjective relations; the individual is meant to interpose and make law *and* be interposed upon and made

subject to laws. Where there is no interposing and law, there will be neither human touch nor friendly voice. In other words, the individual is meant to live within and participate in the relations of a larger community. The demarcation of free will must be firmly set against societal needs. The critique of solitude separates Eliot from the Romantics and makes her a liberal ironist. Thus, Eliot places the relation between free will and determinism within the larger network of the ethical relation. However, it is the ambiguous locus of the ethical relation between Romola and Savanorola that complicates readings of free will and determinism in the novel.[45]

Romola's solitude is cut short by Savonarola's arresting voice, the embodiment of "human presence interposing and making law: "'You are Romola de' Bardi, the wife of Tito Melema'" (355). Here is a remarkable example of an Althusserian hailing, Victorian-style in the cloth of a sixteenth-century monk. The double subjection is striking — Romola is at once interpellated as the daughter of her father and Tito's wife — never once is she simply Romola. Savonarola proceeds to interpose upon her: "You wish your true name and true place in life to be hidden, that you may choose for yourself a new name and a new place, and have no rule but your own will" (355-56). For Althusser individuals are "always already subjects" (176), born into

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[45] For accounts on free will and determinism as well as the historical foundations of Romola, see Germano A. Santangelo's "Villari's Life and Times of Savonarola: A Source for George Eliot's Romola" in *Anglia: Zeitschrift fur Englische Philogie* (1972), Nancy L. Paxton's *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender* (1991), and Pauline Nestor's *George Eliot* (2002), Pasquele Villari's *Life and Times of Savonarola* (1888), and Lorenzo Polizzato's *The Elect Nation: The Savonarola Moment in Florence, 1494-1545* (1994). Eliot has read Villari's *Life and Times of Savonarola* and has used the source extensively upon which to base her version of the Dominican friar. Both Villari and Eliot reject Savonarola's fanaticism but accept and applaud Savonarola's moral tendencies (Santangelo 119). Villari emphasizes that Savonarola "insisted on the efficacy and necessity of good works" (102), and Eliot certainly capitalizes on this point throughout the text. While Savonarola believed in free will — "it is free will that distinguishes man from beast" (qtd in Villari 102) — he also advocated a firm and strict governmental control of the "religious and moral life of the citizens" (Polizzato 29). According to Polizzato, in his sermons, Savonarola repeatedly called for immediate government action against any kind of expenditure and acts of self-interest (29). Thus, free will is never absolutely free; it is free if it accords with certain established rules and if it works within a pre-established network of relations. Eliot takes God out of this network and places the relation between free will and duty within the societal network, where the relation is examined between people, between the individual and community. See Paxton for a developed argument and detailed study of Eliot's ideas concerning societal duty and the influence of Herbert Spencer's ethical philosophy.

fixed ideological formations. For Savonarola, it seems, the situation is no different but is veiled in metaphysical rhetoric. Romola has a "*true* name and *true* place" (emphasis added) — she cannot hide from these. She cannot just choose for herself a different name. Even more significantly, she cannot exercise her own free will.

Romola's first reaction to Savonarola's arresting voice is of defiance: "Romola's mind rose in stronger rebellion with every sentence" (356); she was "determined not to show any sign of submission." A murderous Romola speaks with irritation: " 'I will not return. I acknowledge no right of priests and monks to interfere with my actions. You have no power over me" (356). But such strength of character leaves Savanorola unmoved and heightens his metaphysical discourse: "But it is not the poor monk who claims to interfere with you: it is the *truth* that commands you. And you cannot escape it" (356; emphasis added). Savonarola divests his voice of any religious institutional claims. He separates himself as monk, as a member of a religious order from the higher order of *truth*. Truth, then, commands Romola, but from whence does it come? The truth in question here is the truth of historical juxtaposition and community. It is the truth that Romola initially recognizes in Savonarola's face and gaze. While "there was nothing transcendent in Savonarola's face," it is a "gaze in which simple human fellowship expressed itself as a strongly felt bond" (356). Eliot already sets up the role of the face in the novel's proem, where the spirit's face is "charged with memories" — a face that the narrator specifically marks as "not handsome" and hauntingly comes calling upon us when Romola encounters Savonarola's face which is "not beautiful" (356). Thus this is not an aesthetic experience, it is not goodness found in the beautiful but an ethical experience invoked by the common and everyday. The spirit's face which is "kept distinctly human," charged with memories "of a keen and various

life passed" (2), suggests to the timelessness of ongoing relationships, of fellowship. The proem and the proem's spirit, like Savonarola's face, express the strongly felt bond — these invoke the ethical response in the readers at the very start of reading Romola's story. Readers are compelled to follow the spirit on his journey, and in a similar way, Romola follows the arresting voice, which is infused with a sublimity, being both material and immaterial.

Initially, the sublime arresting voice exists in tension with the appearance of the crucifix. At her weakest moment, at the moment Romola acknowledges having little strength to follow duty, Savonarola asks her to draw forth from her robe that eternal symbol, the crucifix:

> Romola gave a slight start, but her impulse now was to do just what Savonarola told her. Her self-doubt was grappled by a stronger will and a stronger conviction than her own. She drew forth the crucifix.
>
> Still pointing towards it, he said —
>
> 'There, my daughter, is the image of a Supreme Offering, made by Supreme Love, because the need of man was great' [. . .] Romola, with a quick involuntary movement, pressed the crucifix against her mantle and looked at him with more submission than before. (359)

While it is tempting to read this passage as an example of the most murderous and repentant symbol of all — the crucifix — forcing Romola into submission, the truth that commands Romola is a much more complex structure than an Althusserian reading allows no matter how seductive a materialist reading offers itself. Carlyle's symbols, while waxing old, always carry within themselves an intrinsic and eternal value, a value divorced from doctrine and institution, and from time. The materiality of the crucifix points to what Savonarola calls

"Supreme Offering" and "Supreme Love" (359). Yet this is not to be read merely as Christian rhetoric or as Eliot parroting a sixteenth-century Catholic monk. What Savonarola, or more precisely put, what Eliot here has in mind is "the simplest law that lies at the foundation of the trust which binds man to man" (357). This law is beyond doctrine — this is the law that the spirit in the proem sees in the faces of the Florentines that come after him, Levinisian faces that in their alterity he recognizes as his own. Eliot's move to place the burden of furthering universal and transcendent principles upon an actual historical figure poignantly marks her ahistorical historicism.

Thus, Savonarola's voice is arresting, but not in the institutional sense. Romola is seized by the voice, woken up from her state of loneliness, called back from her self-imposed exile into the community. In *George Eliot and Herbert Spencer: Feminism, Evolutionism, and the Reconstruction of Gender* (1991), Nancy L. Paxton argues that Eliot yearns for the "possibility of an ideal society divested of institutionalized patriarchal authority in both the family and the church" (136), and refers to a letter Eliot wrote to Barbara Bodichon in which Eliot writes that she has greater "faith in the working-out of higher possibilities than the Catholic or any other church has presented" and that the "'highest calling and election' is to do without opium and live through all our pain with conscious clear-eyed endurance" (136). But what does it mean to live through pain with clear-eyed endurance and one that is conscious? The sentiment foreshadows Nietzschean philosophy, which resents weakness, embraces pain, and endures. One could argue that Romola lives through her pain with clear-eyed endurance. But it is certainly not the same type of willing to power Nietzsche has in mind. A repentant Romola's mind has "given place to a new presentiment of the strength there might be in submission" (357). Nietzsche would turn

away in disgust, but Eliot's project in Romola rests on this most pure principle of ethics. She submits not to the "presence interposing and making law for her," but to the intersubjective relations that, like Carlyle's organic filaments, bind humanity.

And yet, we disappointingly find Romola sitting in seclusion at the end of the novel, "her hands crossed on her lap and her eyes fixed absently on the distant mountains: she was evidently unconscious of anything around her." (581). A dynamic Romola who has undergone an extensive change, evolving from a dutiful scholar's daughter to a loyal wife to finally "Mamma Romola," has been fully arrested by the end of the novel, called upon herself to the point of a monumental halt: "an eager life had left its marks upon her" (581). Romola bears the signs of a statue, of a life locked within an unmoving body.

4. "Motionless like a Seated Statue:" Mrs. Transome's Historical Body

There is something striking about the statue and the statuesque body. Much like Savonarola's voice that is material but that gestures to something beyond, the statue's materiality, its very material presence always points to the life it seeks to represent. The Museum and Art Gallery in Eliot's hometown, Nuneaton, houses an important collection of George Eliot material. The museum boasts a reconstructed London drawing room, which holds, among other objects, Eliot's writing desk and grand piano. The drawing room is not empty. The room is inhabited by three wax figures. Eliot's wax figure is dressed in a cobalt blue dress (Eliot's own) and sits at the grand piano. The domineering wax figure of George Henry Lewes stands next to Eliot. To make the family complete, John Walter Cross' wax likeness sits in an arm chair, close to the piano. Wax figures based on real, historical figures, statues of historical personages and even moments that carry inscriptions reminding us of significant dates, proper and place names eternalize a

person and moment — the past is inscribed in a material object but it also inherently points to something beyond, to that which it is no more, to that which *was* at one point in time. What the statue points to is a life, reminding me of Carlyle's editor proclaiming with no little desperation, "Life lies buried there!" (*PP* 52) as he observes of the ruins of St. Edmundsbury. Thus, a wax figure or a statue, in its very immobility is mobile, in its very materiality, immaterial. I do not know what transpired in the museum's curators minds to prompt this Eliot-Lewes-Cross wax vision, but the scene brings to my mind Eliot's reoccurring image of *Felix Holt, the Radical's* Mrs. Transome as statuesque.

In a novel that vibrates with movement and change, that concerns itself with reform and political and social adjustments, Mrs. Transome's immobility stands as a stark and significant contrast. But this tension appears to be one that is inherent in historical discourse as noted already in the example of Carlyle's *camera lucida*, of language that enshrines a past and in the very moment of placing the past under the dictates of the letter makes it alive. While *FH* is often read as a Condition of England novel, I suggest we read it as a novel obsessed with the past's persistence in the present. But if the notion of a persisting past implies a deterministic influence upon the present, then I suggest we divorce ourselves from this implication because Eliot's commentary on determinism is much more complex in *FH* than this relation suggests. Published in 1866, during the debate over the Second Reform Bill, its story in turn set during the debate over the Reform Bill of 1832, *FH* is caught in a historical gap that interrupts its characters and readers. But it is a historical gap within which the past and present intersect. The point of intersection marks the moment when the past forcefully penetrates the present and any notion of

progress or forward movement is halted so as to invoke an ethical response in the reader. The introduction that opens the story of Treby Magna in 1832, ends with the following words:

> Many an inherited sorrow that has marred a life has been breathed into no human ear. The poets have told us of a dolorous enchanted forest in the under world. The thorn-bushes there, and the thick-barked stems, have human histories hidden in them; the power of unuttered cries dwells in the passionless-seeming branches, and the red warm blood is darkly feeding the quivering nerves of a sleepless memory that watches through all dreams. These things are a parable. (34)

These things are a parable, but a parable of what? The novel that deals with a very contemporary concern — political reform — is consciously preoccupied with the past and the past's relation to the present. Not at all surprising when the date of its publication is considered. However, despite its very concrete political and social context (both within and outside the text), the plot explicitly focuses on the "human histories" hidden in the "thorn-bushes" and the "unuttered cries." Eliot's concern with the relationship between the individual and community reaches its climax in *FH,* where the narrator emphasizes that "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" (75). So, the relation between the private and the public is causal and seemingly deterministic. And yet the unuttered cries do not simply teach us that the public life determines the private life. Lived experience will not always submit to be determined by ideology. While the novel seems to endorse this view, it also demonstrates a dialectical relation between the private life and the public life. Mrs. Transome's unuttered cries and Esther's most hidden history both are determined by public life and also determine it. We

should here raise the question of sympathy's role and performance in *FH*. Does *FH* stitch the "self into the ostensibly organic textures of community" (Pyle 151)?[46]

The parable that concludes the introduction to the novel does not offer comfort because unuttered cries and hidden histories are just that: unuttered and hidden. Like Mr. Macey's ghostly phenomena, unuttered cries are present absences. No one speaks of them. They are embodied in the unsettling blank spaces on the wall of history. If the present and the wider public is determined by something virtually unknowable, then there is little one can about the present's outcome. One does not know its causes, so it will be difficult to steer its forward movement properly. Thus, quite ominously, "sleepless memory" haunts the present. Eliot's narrator emphasizes the persistence of the past, of memories, in the present, and the past reappears as a force of change, a force that extends from the private to the public.

In the opening pages of the novel, Eliot juxtaposes the present with the coming of the "sleepless memory" with precision. She creates, to borrow from Coleridge that wonderful word, an *esemplastic* vision of the past and present.[47] Stillness and motion harmoniously play off one another like the shadows and lights in *Romola*. We are first immediately historically positioned: "On the 1st of September, in the memorable year of 1832, some one was expected" (35). 1832 is a memorable year for her 1866 readers, but it is also an important year for her characters because the Reform Bill has been passed only a few months before the story's events — reform has taken place. Ideally, when reform takes place, one expects progress to have moved one step forward.

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[46] Pyle's argument about the ideological restorative function of sympathy in Eliot focuses on *Adame Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss.*

[47] See S.T. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria,* chapters 10 and 13, where he discusses his construction of the term "esemplastic" to denote the unique qualities of the imagination as a "plastic power" capable of shaping and being shaped, to combine the ideal and the real.

However, the novel is not so ready to submit to this ideal. The question of reform and what is to be expected of it are the questions that the novel places in the witness box and cross examines.

Someone was expected; someone who will unwittingly give the past power to change present events. Someone was expected at Transome Court, "a large mansion, built in the fashion of Queen Anne's time" (35). The mansion itself seems to stand as something foreign and out of place with the memorable year of 1832. The mansion's grounds are enveloped in tranquility and stillness: "All round, both near and far, there were grand trees, motionless in the still sunshine, and, like all large motionless things, seeming to add to the stillness" (36). The image of perfect stillness continues as "petals fell in a silent shower; a heavy moth floated by, and, when it settled, seemed to fall wearily" and birds "hopped about in perfect tranquility" and "no sound was to be heard louder than a sleepy hum" (36). The stillness and tranquility are perfect to the point of a flaw. The stillness that Eliot's language engenders intriguingly points to the present. It is the present that is still, self-evolved, resting in its very presence. Amidst the stillness there is a door opened, "letting in the warm light on the scagliola pillars, the marble statues, and the broad stone staircase" (36). Tellingly, the stillness is embedded outside the mansion, in nature that one would expect to be alive and ever organically unfolding while the motion takes place among the pillars, marble statues and stone staircases, and a "stronger sign of expectation than all" takes place in the waxy Mrs. Transome (36). Mrs. Transome, like her mansion "built in the fashion of Queen Anne's time," seems like a relic from the past: "her tight-fitting black dress was much worn; the fine lace of her cuffs and collar, and of the small veil which fell backwards over her hight comb, was visibly mended" (36). The anteroom to the library in which Mrs. Transome expects someone with great anticipation, and which is, we are told, Mrs. Transome's "usual sitting-room" had a

“great deal of tarnished gilding and dinginess on the wall and furniture of this room” (37). Paradoxically, the anticipation, the movement forward, and decay, the tarnish and dinginess, are associated with the past. A fluid, alive past —a sleepless memory — is enshrined in Mrs. Transome’s body.

And yet while Mrs. Transome is motionless and stuck in the past, the community is in the throws of change. The novel is a bit more ambivalent toward change than Mrs. Transome’s position suggests. We can see this ambivalence by juxtaposing her with Esther who reads Byron, the advocate of solitude, but who moves from the isolated Romantic individual to an individual who will be stitched into the community. And yet it seems that Eliot is preoccupied more with stitching together a fragmented Esther than stitching her into the community. Midway through the text, Esther’s life is described as “a heap of fragments;” and, not only was her life a pile of Benjaminian debris but “so were her thoughts” (203). The narrator concludes that “some great energy was needed to bind them together” (203). The binding agent will be Felix.

Like Mrs. Transome’s life, Esther’s life is emblematic of the divide between practical and official consciousness. But while Mrs. Transome’s secrets enshrine her body, Esther’s body pulsates with the desire to change and move. When Esther defends Felix her motion and practical consciousness overpower the town leaders’ official consciousness. In a text that would expound official consciousness — i.e. the historical and political attitude toward reform — I imagine, one would read about a riot in a small English town, a certain Felix Holt getting arrested, representing the election atmosphere in small English towns that have made a leap from the rural to the industrial but where the moral reform has not been adjusted to meet the change. But the practical consciousness in the novel demonstrates that a young woman "saves" Felix by

undergoing an internal revolution which enables her through her testimony to overthrow the judicial system. This is also one of the more sentimental parts of the novel, symbolically demonstrating the power of "fellow feeling." Of course, there is more here than meets the eye — well before Esther "saves" Felix, the narrator drops hints pointing to his redemption because Felix has culture "stamped" on his forehead, his face "worthy to be called 'the human face divine'" (324). When one has culture stamped upon one's forehead, one does not deserve to be imprisoned with the common mob. Eliot repeatedly tries to, so to say, take Felix's clothes off and show the essence of the man — the culture imprinted on his body.

The emphasis on culture's civilizing effects, its discipline of the body (be it political, cultural, physical), underlies the *"Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt's"* argument that people are "neither very wise nor very virtuous" and in want of culture (515). Certainly, the moral force and the human fellowship that takes place in the courthouse cannot happen overnight, and yet it does in Treby Magna. But we are in a world of fiction and the *Address* is not. Urged by Blackwood to write the *Address* and sign it as Felix Holt, Eliot published the article in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Review* in 1868, and it stands as a curious example of a fictional element (Felix Holt) transcending the space of fiction. The *Address* offers a temperate and conservative argument on civic responsibility and reform where education and moral reform must precede any type of political change. While Eliot's radical advocates gradual change, the Felix of the *Address* is different in degree than the Felix of the novel. In the *Address*, Felix takes on the clothes of Matthew Arnold and tells us to treasure "knowledge, science, poetry, refinement of thought, feeling, and manners, great memories and the interpretation of great records, which is carried on from the minds of one generation to the minds of another" (525).

The emphasis placed on the memory and interpretation of cultural history in the *Address* is tamed in the novel; that is, the external tradition is displaced with an internal one, with something nearly organic, internal and eternal, with the "human face divine." If we follow Levinas' notion of the face, here the human face divine inherently requests an ethical response from the onlooker. And, more to the point, the ethics of sympathy and culture becomes linked, and both are imprinted on the body. The nineteenth-century anthropomorphic view of society is present in the Felix's *Address*: "society stands before us like that wonderful piece of life, the human body, with all its various parts depending on one another, and with a terrible liability to get wrong because of that delicate dependence" (519). Felix continues to warn how the human body is apt to suffer from many diseases and how difficult it is "to find out exactly where the seat or beginning of the disorder is" (519). In contrast to this body in motion, Mrs. Transome's immobile body is not an example of "that wonderful piece of life" — it is lifeless if anything. Hers does not seem to be the human face divine, deserving of sympathy, stamped with culture.

The moral reform on a communal level is displaced with the revolutionary inner reform that Esther experiences in a moment of rupture, in the courthouse when the practical and official consciousness are pitted against one another. The narrator beautifully expresses the moment Esther decides to speak for Felix:

> When a woman feels purely and nobly, that ardour of hers which breaks through formulas too rigorously urged on men by daily practical needs, makes one of her most precious influences: she is the added impulse that shatters the stiffening crust of cautious experience. He inspired ignorance gives sublimity to actions incongruously simple, that otherwise they would make men smile [. . .] And

> today they were making one danger, one terror, one irresistible impulse for her heart. Her feelings were growing into a necessity for action, rather than a resolve to act. (478)

Notwithstanding the feminization and the organic quality of action (to act transpires as an organic movement of Esther's feelings, not a conscious and deliberate resolution), the narrator clearly distinguishes between practical and official consciousness, and the practical consciousness stems from the inner workings of the individual and lends "sublimity to actions." Esther faces the reality that facts do not speak the truth: "What she had painfully pressing on her inward vision was, that the trial was coming to an end, and that the voice of right and truth had not been strong enough" (477). Here Esther's inward vision — her mind's eye or the imagination — is pressed upon the discordant realities that overlay like a palimpsest the truth of Felix's innocence.

With all its politics and talk of reform and radicalism, *FH* is essentially a private history. The entire novel is preoccupied with Esther's development. When she refuses to profit from her inheritance, Esther's personal history transcends her past and Mrs. Transome's "unuttered cries." The unuttered cries of her own past are exposed. The material remains, her mother's and father's locks of hair, and the journal and the handwriting point to the true origin of her identity. Like Mrs. Transome's past, in guise of Harold, who as Mrs. Transome's son represents her past and her future as inherently one's child gestures towards the future, Esther's past comes back to radically decenter her consciousness. She is no longer the daughter of the "sensitive little minister" (195), but an inheritor of a large and wealthy estate. Esther refuses this identity, however, and remains, so to say, the minister's daughter, subverting the class order and middle class ideology. Where

does the optimism of the individual's triumph come from? It seems to derive from an experience of inner, not social transformation. The Felix of the *Address* cautions that resolution concerning reform must be "mixed with temperance" (530), but there is nothing temperate in Esther's move to speak for Felix's freedom.

The novel is also very much concerned with Mrs Transome's inner life and the fact that most of her history is implied and enfolded in silence. Consider the fact that Mrs. Transome does not want to tell Harold the truth — she wants the truth — or the past — to remain silent. She forcefully resists Jermyn's contemplation to tell Harold that he is his father, "'I will never tell him!' said Mrs. Transome, starting up, her whole frame thrilled with a passion that seemed almost to make her young again" (430). The reason behind veiling or unveiling a past here is more complicated than simply deciding not to tell so as not to disturb the present. Eliot's narrator implies a particular ethics here having to do with one's right to speak the past. Jermyn does not have the right to disclose the past. "Would it not be right for him to know?" he asks, and it is the narrator not Mrs. Transome who answers his question, endorsing an ethics of disclosure: "Perhaps some of the most terrible irony of the human lot is this of deep truth coming to be uttered by lips that have no right to it" (430).

Mrs. Transome has "stooped" to Jermyn, burying her life, her lived experience to accommodate the official consciousness. Jermyn has ethically lost the power to release the unuttered cries. Even so, Eliot reminds us in the introduction that memories are sleepless. In the exchange between Mrs. Transome and Jermyn, Eliot tries to carve out the Levinasian saying in the said — to unveil the practical consciousness that is often hidden beneath the official. Up to this point, the narrator has dropped subtle hints of Harold's origin throughout the narrative; now

she lets the unuttered cries scream, interrupting the dormant past that Jermyn and Mrs. Transome share.

Because the novel is concerned with reform it is not surprising that criticism latches itself onto Felix and Esther as representatives of change. In most criticism of *FH*, Mrs. Transome is passed over. The omission is interesting because Mrs Transome's statuesqueness acts like the material trace that points to a wider, fuller past that can never be told properly and that impedes change. The omission is also striking because she is the locus of sympathy in this novel. Eliot's narrator is most sympathetic to this character — the narrator certainly understands her. The narrator tries hard to engender sympathy for Mrs. Transome, yet, if the omissions of her in criticism are any indication, in this effort, Eliot fails. So, then why place sympathy in a character that does not want to change? Or cannot change? Or holds onto the past? It is precisely because Mrs. Transome cannot summon Esther's inner revolution within herself that we should feel compassion for her. It is also precisely because her motionlessness jarringly points to unuttered cries, which Eliot's narrator beautifully and sympathetically hints to: "Motionless in that way, her clear-cut features keeping distinct record of past beauty, she looked like an image faded, dried, and bleached by uncounted suns, rather than a breathing woman who had numbered the years as they passed, and had a consciousness within her which was the slow deposit of those ceaseless rolling years" (400). Here, the past in *FH* is both immobilizing and mobilizing — the past preserves a state of affairs and destroys the present.

Eliot's penetrating vision shows the small town whose public and private are so intertwined that one cannot discern where the one begins and the other ends. This vision is already set up in the intro: the narrator pits these generalized — official — scenes of rural Treby

Magna and the more "advanced" Treby but then suggests that Sampson could, if he would tell us “fine stories,” ironic stories because the stories would never match up the narrative we have of Treby’s progress (34). Eliot here seems to want to break the totality of Treby Magna and in general the aftermath of the 1832 Reform and show the essence — the inner lives that do make up histories, that actually make and lead to Reforms of 1832 but never get told — "unuttered cries.” In this way, the novel is one sustained reflection on the inner histories of 1832. When in *The Theory of the Novel,* Lukács asserted that “the need for reflexion is the deepest melancholy of every great and genuine novel” (85), he might have been thinking of *Felix Holt.*

Williams' official and practical consciousness and Rorty's adjustable vocabularies and metaphors repeatedly occur in Eliot. The tension helps Eliot reflect upon and revise Romanticism by calling up all the various jarring relations. We have noticed: comforting continuity vs. discontinuity and interruption; detached vs. nostalgic visions of the past; communal solidarity vs. isolation and alienation. All of these contradictory relations take place within her realist aesthetics and with a subtle but pulsating sublime, which nevertheless gestures to an ethics. Kant and Carlyle’s sublime functions as a moment of rupture, of a struggle between reason and imagination, as a way of trying to aspire to knowledge. Yet Eliot finds a way to resolve the struggle in her insistence on fusing contrary tendencies in her characters, or sublimely exposing discordant tendencies. Sublimity appears when opposites are brought together and the tension is sustained, but Eliot allows her protagonist — Esther — to resolve the tensions through an experience of internal and external transformation — through a sequence of historical phenomenological sensations. Esther is even more murderous and repentant than Romola, but unlike for the earlier heroine, Eliot deals a better hand at cards for Esther.

And yet, although Esther experiences resolution, the novel does not. It ends on a wry ironic note. The narrator nonchalantly asserts that "Treby Magna has prospered as the rest of England has prospered. Doubtless there is more enlightenment now" (506). If we look beyond the pages of the novel and stare in the face of the historical July of 1866, we know that the Second Reform Bill has been defeated, inspiring the Hyde Park Riots. The concluding sentiment subverts the entire novel's preoccupation with inner reform and ends on a most vulgar materialist and economic note: "There is a young Felix, who has a great deal more science than his father, but not much more money" (507). As with *Romola's* ending, it becomes very difficult to discern the power that fellow feeling and internal conversion exercise at moments of interruption.

Ultimately, Eliot's liberal irony articulates a temperate, Victorian version of relativist social ethics. She presents us with multiple and overlapping breaks and interruptions within the historical horizon, gesturing to something beyond the material to the immaterial and immanent. Eliot does not permit the consciousness of the ruptures to completely undermine her humanist faith in the possibility of individual redemption through the immanent ethics of sympathy. By denying the presentation of an undisturbed historical continuum, the breaks, that are epistemological and social, do, however, make her less optimistic about the possibility of achieving communal solidarity and progress. Thus, Eliot at once weaves and unweaves, endorses and undermines her own aesthetics and ethics. She attempts to speak transcendent truths but refuses to speak them in a single voice.

CONCLUSION

At the Centre for European Reception Studies in Brussels, Belgium, and in collaboration with Ghent University, on March 17, 2009, Jerome McGann held a talk entitled "Philology in a New Key" in which he explored the increasing digitalization of literature. For McGann, the digital world if used properly can be not only a platform for storing knowledge but also a space in which to preserve cultural memory and cultural inheritance. He has tested ideas about the significance of digital media in the preservation of cultural inheritance in his game IVANHOE, which presents criticism as a game, a game that is not only playful and frivolous but also powerful in producing and reproducing new forms of interpretation and knowledge.

When I participated in the seminar, I was half way through writing my dissertation. Immediately, I started imagining my writers with access to the internet. The digital world is not a linear world, and I think, this premise would, with more or less reserve, attract Walter Scott, James Hogg, Thomas Carlyle, and George Eliot. What would have Scott done? He would have overpowered Google, I am sure. He would have produced massive on-line texts of the Waverley novels with hyperlinks. He would have constantly updated his on-line texts, revising and rewriting, adding new links, masterfully manipulating us, disguising himself as his texts increasingly spread like a web across cyberspace, his own authorship retrieving further and further into obscurity. He would have provided what he, in fact, did provide with nineteenth-century resources: footnotes, appendices, embedded narratives. Then I thought of Hogg. Hogg would have jumped on the bandwagon. But his own on-line editions would probably be chaotic, with misleading or malfunctioning links, with hypertexts that bear no connection to his texts. He

would at once offer information and take it away. Carlyle, I imagine, would look at a computer with distrust and contempt; after all, it is a utilitarian, pedantic machine. Yet a digitalized *French Revolution* would finely demonstrate his claim that “action is solid” (*OH* 8). Eliot would embrace the technology, appreciating the ease for social networking and the building of communities. She would diligently organize the world according to her historic imagination only to experience hard drive malfunction.

All four writers, to my mind, were preoccupied with the questions that McGann has raised within the conditions of their own historical moment: preservation of cultural memories and the dissemination of knowledge in an age in which information more often than not replaces knowledge. Carlyle, Scott, Hogg, and Eliot emphasize that the past and cultural inheritance are built on what Carlyle saw as "innumerable biographies," where each individual biography participates in the imagining of a collective yet fragmented and untotalized past. As Hogg playfully shows, the individual biography alone is fragmented, fluid, unknowable. What a complex mess the collective biography must be.

Carlyle looks with skepticism on the project of capturing the past in history. His empiricist editor in *Sartor Resartus* is baffled, nearly made paralyzed, at the site of bags full of scraps of paper that contain bits and pieces of Teufelsdröck’s life. He sets out to write a biography of the German philosopher that ends in apparent failure — the scraps of information, the accumulation of facts, ironically renders the biography unwritable. The truth remains, somewhat romantically, in the unwritable or usayable, in the silences that make up one’s life. So, he teaches historians how to write the past responsibly, to acknowledge its sublime vastness, and

ultimately the limits of its knowability. He teaches his readers how to read the past with honesty and earnestness, with an acceptance of contradiction and limits.

In the face of Enlightenment's historiographic allegiance to linear narrative, Carlyle recognized that history proceeds artificially, i.e., sequentially and diachronically while the past is full of synchrony. Events are interlocked, and many actions take place in a single moment. Therefore, linear narrative does not do justice to action. I have built my own project on this understanding, noting attempts in Carlyle, Scott, Hogg and Eliot to disturb this narrative linearity, to attempt at representing solid action through narrative and language. This, then, posed a particular aesthetic and ethical challenge for nineteenth-century writers interested in representing through narrative the past's Janus-like face embodying both the ideal and the real. Any sort of linear representation seems to fall short of the past's "truth," its complex structure as solid action that without fail shows truths in place of truth. Let's recall Eliot's Mr. Macey who states it most clearly: "I'm for holding with both sides; for as I say, the truth lies between 'em" (*SM* 54). In a self-reflexive moment, Eliot further finely pointed out the problem in *Daniel Deronda:* "We recognize the alphabet; we are not sure of the language" (111). To organize the past's alphabet, to package the past in linear narrative — to represent it "as it was" — raises an ethical concern of ways to escape totalizing the past through the medium of language. As I have shown, the writers resort to different strategies ranging from jarring linguistic pyrotechnics as in Carlyle to the use of dialect and multiple narrators and fictional editors in Scott and Hogg and hyper self-reflexive accounts of their own narrative and narratorial strategies in Eliot.

I demonstrated that Carlyle's own language performs a type of ethics that today we associate with Emmanuel Levinas, calling readers to enter a face-to-face relation with the past.

Carlyle's historical narratives are fundamentally concerned with the historian, the editor, and the reader of the past and what they make of the textual remains the past leaves behind. Their engagement with the past in the historical text demands a responsibility based on their relation toward the past as an alterity, as a Levinisian Other. Carlyle's narratives tailor a type of historicist approach I call ahistorical historicism, in which contingencies, while acknowledged, are transcended, and his narratives unveil universal essences that call attention to an ethical response towards the past and those who inhabit the past.

In Carlyle's historical narrative, the various interruptions that occur — the intrusive narrators, the fictional editors, various fragments of archival documents that intrude upon the narrative, and the rampant self-reflexivity — reveal the saying in the said. In a similar fashion but for an altogether different purpose, Scott's historical romances interrupt prominent Enlightenment historiography regarding nationalism. In Scott, the memory of specific historical moments calls into question the master narrative of the British Union. Scott's historical romances offer a space in which the past is invited into the present. His narratives thus enter into a tense engagement between the desire to sustain historical progress symbolized by the British nation and the need to question the newly formed national identity.

If Scott's narratives balance between the desire to sustain and undo a historical memory, Hogg pushes the tipping point to a radical ethics of historical play, where the two dominant historiographical approaches in the early nineteenth-century are both unraveled in a textual chaos of narrative hybridity, narratorial multiplicity and heteroglossia, and editorial confusion. Hogg's move toward decentering the Enlightenment / Romantic binary gestures towards a type of humanism I call deconstructionist humanism, marking a radical ethical relation towards the past

that unlike Scott's is concerned not so much with the community or nation as with the individual and humanity.

Eliot admired Scott and Carlyle, yet she set out to write a different historical novel. While echoing Carlyle, her own engagement with the past will turn towards a more pragmatic ethical program. The Victorian obsession over the subject's role in community is inscribed in Eliot's historical imagination. Her narratives seeks to write the Romantic solitary individual back into the community, to make her an ethically responsible member of society. However, her narratives, while controled by masterful narrators, betray breaks in the historical continuum and jam the "Key to all Mythologies." These interruptions are marked by tensions between her desire to contextualize and engage in an empiricist, realist aesthetic and her commitment to transcendental and transhistorical human values. Her ethical relation towards the past depends on a model of intersubjective relations among a community of bonded but unique individuals, whose face-to-face encounters take place in a social context.

This project originated from a deep-seated love of Carlyle's innumerable biographies and a belief that pasts persist. The pasts persist sometimes lovingly, sometimes gently haunting, sometimes disturbingly confrontational, abruptly erupting and destroying what came after them, and sometimes reinforcing received notions of themselves. But they always co-exist with the present, constructing and reconstructing it. In my own non-linear representation of the nineteenth-century narratives concerned with the past, I hoped to offer readings that refuse to impose coherence and order on Carlyle's prose that refuses to be labeled, Scott's ambivalent historical romance, Hogg's decentering romantic prose, and Eliot's realist novel that puts its own form to question. Their approaches to the past and the construction of their unique historical

imaginations share an ethical component that refuses to possess the past and subject it to their purposes. Their narratives enact a palimpsestuous relation between each genre form and its critical attitude towards the past, a metaphorical translation of the immaterial past into history, as well as a preoccupation with the past that takes on different and unmatching clothes but that is always marked by reverence and respect. In reading these writers, I recognized the alphabet; in writing about them, I was not always sure of the language — like my writers, I recognized the value in the unsayable in history and the uncertainty inherent in writing history.

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